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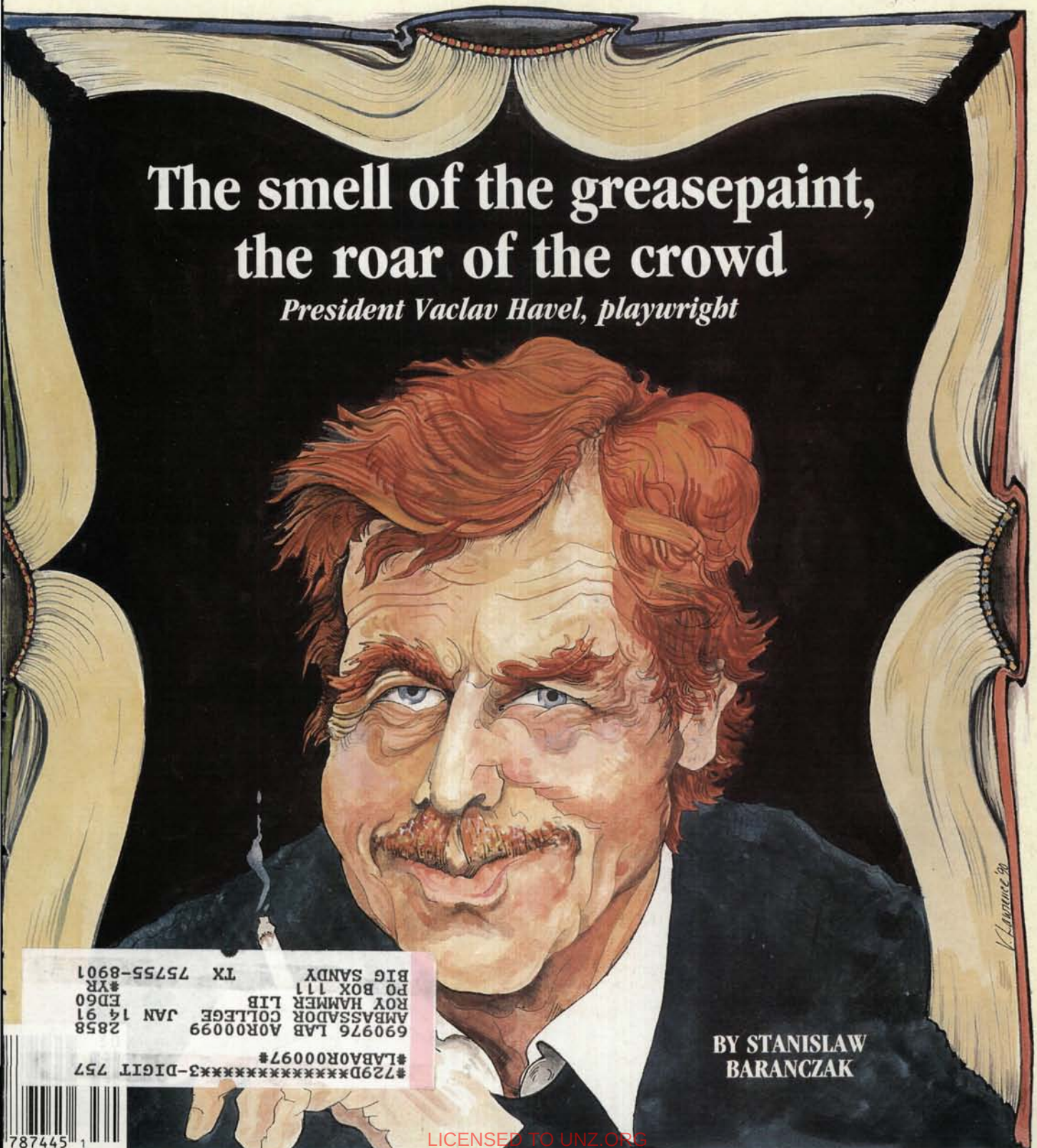

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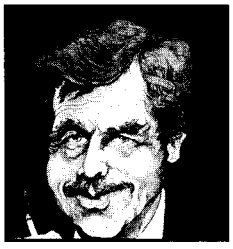

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TRB®
FROM WASHINGTON

Bart for president

"Why don't I learn? The answers to life's problems aren't at the bottom of a bottle. They're on TV!" —Homer Simpson

A thirty-second spot on ABC's "Roseanne" will cost advertisers $375,000 next year. "Roseanne" is the No. 1 show of the past television season. It's a comedy of lower-middle-class resentment, of a particularly modern kind. The heroine is a woman who struggles to balance the obligations of holding a job and raising a family in a world of sexism, oppressive bosses, dead-end jobs, pinched finances, and other social forces generally unhelpful to people in her position. It's often funny. And whenever I watch, I can't help thinking: If this is the most popular television show in the country, why can't the Democratic Party win a national election? What has Hollywood figured out that the Democrats haven't?

I think something similar while watching "The Simpsons," the fantastic cartoon family show on the Fox network, which has become a national obsession since its debut last January. In a typical recent week "Roseanne" and "The Simpsons" were ranked first and second among women ages eighteen to forty-nine. Among men in that demographically desirable group, "The Simpsons" was No. 1. ("Roseanne," feminist tilt and all, was in sixth place with the boys, just ahead of two NBA playoff games.)

Drug czar William Bennett, looking for another publicity hit, recently took on Bart, the bratty ten-year-old Simpson son. Spying a Bart poster at a drug rehabilitation center, Bennett scolded, "You guys aren't watching 'The Simpsons,' are you? That's not going to help you." Apparently Bennett was taking his cue from a few humorless educators who have objected to a popular Bart Simpson T-shirt declaring, "Underachiever and proud of it." The czar beat a hasty retreat when the entire country responded as one with another Bartism: "Don't have a cow, man." He claimed he'd never actually seen the show and had nothing against it.

However, Bennett's dismay, whether feigned or sincere, was justified. "The Simpsons" is no threat to drug rehabilitation. But, like "Roseanne," it *is* a direct challenge to Republican claims to be the party that is addressing middle-American values and concerns. The Simpson family seems a bit better off than the Conners of "Roseanne"—the cartoon Marge Simpson doesn't work, an option not available to her all-too-fleshly sister, Roseanne Conner—but the Simpsons, too, suffer from economic and spiritual alienation, not to mention an environment ravaged by nuclear and toxic wastes.

Ever since Ginger Rogers's mother complained to the House Un-American Activities Committee that a movie featuring her daughter had contained the line, "Share and share alike—that's democracy," right-wingers have worried that Hollywood lefties are infecting innocent audience minds with progressive notions. A recent newsletter from something called the Media Research Center reviews another successful sitcom, "Designing Women" (CBS). In one particular episode, the reviewer notes with distress, the characters "became union advocates after witnessing terrible working conditions at a curtain factory. . . . Conveniently ignored: mandatory union dues and membership, other approaches to solving labor problems, and American unions' long-standing track record of helping liberal Democrats and liberal causes." A disgraceful artistic lapse, to be sure.

But advertisers aren't paying $375,000 for thirty seconds to finance the spread of left-wing agitprop. They're paying because people are watching. The producers and writers of "Roseanne" and "The Simpsons"—though possibly Democrats and certainly not devoid of artistic ambition—are creatures of commerce as well. If their shows have a liberal slant, which they do, it's obviously a slant they think—correctly—will sell.

It's puzzling, therefore, that liberal politics can't sell. Even more puzzling: Hollywood's growing influence on the Democratic Party is widely believed to hurt the party in its efforts to reclaim the middle-American "silent majority" that has been going Republican since Nixon. In their overt politics, Hollywood liberals are more interested in El Salvador and tropical rain forests than in the meat-and-potatoes concerns of traditional Democratic constituencies. Yet in its commercial life, Hollywood is brilliant at appealing to these very constituencies on liberalish themes.

"Roseanne" and "The Simpsons" both celebrate "family values," but with a left-wing twist: the family as a haven from the cruelties of the economic marketplace, and as threatened by those same economic forces. Roseanne loses her job when she won't work overtime on the weekend. She is reduced to selling magazines by telephone. (To one prospect: "Well, I'm not interested either, but it's my job.") Up for a position as secretary to some deskbound big shot (alienated personnel director, a black woman: "the man doesn't even need a secretary, he doesn't do anything . . ."), she's disqualified because she doesn't know how to use a computer. Homer Simpson, meanwhile, loses his job at the nuclear plant but despairs of qualifying for one at the toxic waste dump: "I'm not a supervising technician, I'm a technical supervisor!"

Roseanne and Homer are obviously heirs of Ralph Kramden and Archie Bunker. But the American Everyman has changed, and not just because one of them is a woman. For one thing, compared with their TV ancestors, the Simpsons and the Conners are well off. They live in nice houses, compared with Ralph and Alice Kramden's stark walk-up flat. Homer Simpson wears a tie to work. Dan Conner is some kind of independent construction contractor. In short, they are not your traditional "working class." They are the new middle class, making a good living during good times at postindustrial sorts of jobs, but obsessed with what the social critic Barbara Ehrenreich calls "fear of falling." It is this sense of the precariousness of middle-class life—fed by two decades of stagnant median family income—that the Democratic Party has spectacularly failed to tap.

Then there's Bart. He's not a bad kid, merely an independent spirit. That makes him genuinely dangerous. We cheer when he cheats on an IQ test, because the teacher has explained: this won't affect your grade in class; it will merely determine your fate for the rest of your life. "How important is it to be popular?' he asks his father. "I'm glad you asked, son," says the hapless Homer. "Being popular is the most important thing in the world." Of course the point of the episode is to teach the opposite lesson. And by pursuing his own independent course, true to his ideals, Bart now is even more popular than Mr. Popularity-Above-All, George Bush. Which is a lot more than any flesh-and-blood Democrat can claim.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Civil slights

To the editors:

In your analysis of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 and *Wards Cove* v. *Atonio* ("Indiscriminate Goal," July 2), you claim, as employers have for years, that suits based on racially unbalanced workplaces force employers to adopt racial quotas. This has never been the case. To defend accusations of racial imbalances, employers before *Wards Cove* only had to show that their hiring criteria were related to the job duties employees performed.

You also claim that under *Wards Cove* once an employee shows a racial imbalance, the employer remains obligated to prove that his employment practice serves his legitimate employment goals. This is wrong. The major complaint about *Wards Cove* is that the employer is no longer required to prove anything. It remains with the employee to prove that the employer's practice does not serve legitimate employment goals. The difficulty with this is that the employee must prove a negative, a criterion you criticized elsewhere in the editorial when the burden fell on the employer.

Finally, your cheapest shot at the Civil Rights Act of 1990 is that it would only assist the most successful and prosperous blacks. But the plaintiffs in *Wards Cove* were mostly Filipino and Alaskan Native cannery workers, none of whom is particularly prosperous and most of whom have been exploited for years.

No one argues that laws against employment and discrimination are the solution for unskilled minorities and the "underclass." But these laws, and particularly the standard of proof that was eviscerated in *Wards Cove*, have gone a long way toward helping qualified minorities get the chance to enter and succeed in the work force.

DANIEL ADDISON
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

To the editors:

Your editorial had a sympathetic word for just about everyone involved in the civil rights issue except the victims of job discrimination and their advocates on Capitol Hill. Both groups deserve more evenhanded treatment.

People who go to court to fight discrimination are not seeking unfair advantages. They want what you say you want: to even the scales. The Alaskan Native and Filipino cannery workers whose case was rebuffed by the Supreme Court last year were clustered in low-wage jobs, living separately, and even given inferior food. The Civil Rights Act does no more than restore to such groups the same legal protections they have counted on in the nearly twenty years since the Court's earlier *Griggs* v. *Duke Power Co.* decision.

Also, civil rights groups haven't "lost their will." They've found the tenacity to pursue the unglamorous but necessary task of protecting hard-won gains. To suggest that civil rights leaders are somehow selling out the poor among their ranks is to misread both this bill and its supporters.

JOHN BUCHANAN
Washington, D.C.

The writer is chairman of the People For the American Way Action Fund.

Creative flow

To the editors:

Robert Hughes seems very adept at analyzing outdated assumptions of imperial supremacy, etc. ("The Decline of the City of Mahagonny," June 25), but isn't the whole idea of art schools, museums, and connoisseurship a cultural creation of a certain period? New York's art world may be irrelevant in an increasingly global world, its primacy leaking away to other areas, but isn't it possible that the same thing may be happening to Hughes's narrow conception of what he (I guess euphemistically) calls "fine" art? Isn't it possible that the lack of great or good painters and sculptors in our day is not due to some precipitous American decline, but rather to the flow of talented and creative people into other fields: film, television, advertising, popular music, and, god forbid, video? The mass media is not some silly inspiration for failed pop art—the mass media is art.

KEN NUNNEY
Los Angeles, California

Hope and Tories

To the editors:

Andrew Sullivan (Washington Diarist, "Breathless," June 25) says that, because the swing to Labour in the recent British local elections was less than media pundits had predicted, the Tories "did quite well." Actually, their net loss was more than 200 seats and Labour's net gain more than 300, including a 15 percent swing in its favor in the supposed Tory stronghold of the southern counties.

Many Tory M.P.s wish the results had been "resoundingly awful" rather than

continued on page 41

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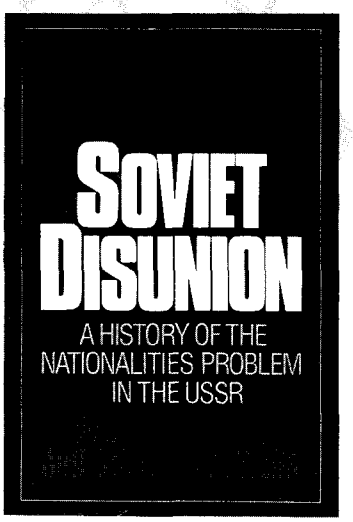

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JULY 23, 1990

LIP-FLOP

It's a matter of simple justice for George Bush to be subjected to the political pummeling he is currently taking for reversing his "no new taxes" pledge. The punishment is merited not so much for the reversal as for the pledge itself—a demagogic exercise that did massive damage to the level of political discourse in this country and that is now starkly revealed to have been a piece of pure political pandering unanchored in political conviction. More justice would be done if the president's precious popularity ratings were to plunge and his disapproval ratings were to rise to meet them, as was the case before he mouthed Peggy Noonan's famous "read my lips" line at the Republican National Convention in 1988. And justice would begin actually to prevail if head-to-head polls showed that a couple of Democratic contenders had a chance to beat Bush in 1992. That might get them off their duffs and into the fray, promoting policies of fiscal balance, social renewal, and tax equity that might even attract a majority of the electorate—and give Bush the fat lip he deserves.

Now it's clear that the Republican Party perpetrated one of the great political frauds of this century: the supply-side myth that cutting taxes for upper-income Americans would lead to a burst of investment, savings, and growth that would balance the federal budget and maintain the social safety net. Bush himself knew better in 1980, when he denounced Ronald Reagan's dream plan as "voodoo economics." Then, because Reagan chose him to be his running mate, Bush converted to Reagan's religion. He kept the faith, at least in public, until this year. Finally, he's been forced to confess that "increased tax revenues" will be necessary to restore the nation's fiscal health.

And even this he has not done with class. He did not address the nation and say, "I misled you" or, "We were wrong." Instead, he issued a written statement on the same day that Nelson Mandela could be expected to dominate the headlines with a speech to Congress. Then he ducked out of sight and ordered his minions to be silent. Only after all hell broke loose in the newspapers and among congressional Republicans did he call a press conference and explain, lamely, that "an enormous problem" had arisen—a slowed economy, a $150 billion deficit for fiscal year 1991, and the prospect of Gramm-Rudman budget cuts of $100 billion—forcing him to "take a look at a new situation." Though he compared himself to Abraham Lincoln as a fresh thinker, he would not make a forthright statement that he will accept "higher taxes."

Except in a few cases, Democrats have decided not to gloat about Bush's reversal. That's understandable in narrow political terms: if Democrats cheer when taxes are about to be raised, they only help Republicans portray them as tax-aholics. And why shouldn't Democrats take on the mantle of statesmen when anti-tax Republicans are doing a fine job of bashing their own president?

But Democrats need to make clear the major message of Bush's reversal: just as they predicted, Reagan-Bush Republican economics did not work, will not work, cannot work. The principal result of these policies was not growth (in fact, for the 1960s the average GNP per capita increased by 2.5 percent each year; for the 1970s, by 1.7 percent; for the 1980s, by 1.9 percent, compared with 3.6 percent for Japan). It was redistribution. Consider a few facts:

Federal spending as a percentage of GNP did not fall during the 1980s. It started at 22 percent and finished at 22 percent. Defense spending went up, civilian spending went down (especially safety net programs,

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which decreased from 2.2 percent of GNP to 1.6 percent). Interest on the national debt rose most of all—from $82.4 billion in 1980 to $169.1 billion in 1990 (in constant dollars), or from 2.1 percent of GNP to 3.7 percent.

This happened, in turn, because lower tax rates did not, as Reagan and Bush promised, produce increased revenues and a balanced budget. All federal taxes as a percentage of GNP fell from 19.3 percent in 1980 to 18.9 percent. Federal income tax revenues, which pay the bills for most of government (excluding Social Security), dropped from 14.1 percent to 12.5 percent.

For all the talk of tax "cuts," what the Reagan-Bush tax policies actually did was to shift tax burdens down the income ladder. Counting Social Security tax increases and income tax cuts, persons in the lowest fifth of the population (earning under $10,000 a year) paid 8.4 percent of their incomes in taxes in 1980 and 9.7 in 1990. Persons in the top fifth (earning more than $50,000) went from paying 27.3 percent to 25.8 percent; those in the top 5 percent (earning more than $100,000) went from 29.5 to 26.7 percent. And those in the top 1 percent (making on average more than $600,000 per year) went from 31.8 to 27.2 percent.

Republican economics was supposed to foster growth, making everyone richer. If those on top had higher incomes and lower taxes, at least the lower orders would get their trickle, too. It didn't happen. The very rich got much richer and the very poor got much poorer. The average real after-tax income of the poorest tenth of all Americans dropped from $4,791 in 1980 to $4,295 in 1990. For the second poorest tenth, it dropped from $9,456 to $9,119. For the top 10 percent, it rose from $75,600 to $106,638. For the highest 1 percent, income increased from $213,675 to $399,697. Middle-class people who averaged $30,000 in 1980 brought home about $31,000 in 1990, a meager increase of around 0.3 percent a year.

Measured another way, the proportion of all national income earned by the richest 1 percent of all families went from 8.7 percent in 1977 to 13.2 percent in 1990. For the bottom 40 percent, it dropped from 15.5 percent to 12.8 percent. Those in the middle fifth dropped from 16.2 percent to 14.8 percent.

Democrats can do two things with these numbers and the human story they tell. One approach is to go "populist" and try to pit the lower-income groups against the higher ones. This is what Republican political strategist Kevin Phillips is anticipating (if not advocating) in Washington's hot new book, *The Politics of Rich and Poor* (Random House), and there's no question that opportunities abound for class-based righteous indignation. The savings and loan catastrophe, the Milken-Trump-Garfinckel spectacles of go-go finance, and leveraged buyouts leading to bankruptcy all could spark such a battle. And the decline in average incomes of young male high school graduates at a time when incomes for the very rich were exploding could fan the flames.

Democrats should exploit the opportunities but should not make the politics of envy their main weapon. It risks creating the impression that Democrats are anti-growth; and there is the awkward reality that Democrats controlled Congress when Reagan-Bush policies were put into effect. A better Democratic approach is to point out that Republican policies simply did not benefit the American people as a whole. The national savings rate fell from 16.2 percent of GNP in 1980 to 13.4 percent in 1989. Business investment increased hardly at all, and civilian R&D spending stayed at 1.8 percent of GNP while Japan's increased to 2.8 percent. It's time again for the Democrats to be the party of change.

Whatever the ultimate political fallout of Bush's tax zigzags, the country needs to take action in the near term to begin restoring its fiscal health. The first step is to flesh out all the measures called for (in vague terms) in Bush's June 26 statement. "Tax revenues" must indeed be "increased," which is to say taxes must be raised—not just energy, alcohol, and cigarette taxes, but also income taxes for those in the highest bracket. Income from Social Security ought to be fully taxable, and the Social Security COLA can be frozen for six months or a year. Farm subsidies and defense expenditures need cutting. Though all this will pain many interest groups, it will produce lower interest rates and a chance to keep the economy out of recession.

Of course, Bush could benefit in 1992 from a bipartisan act of budget statesmanship in 1990 if there is no recession. He may have changed his stance on taxes just in the nick of time to avert economic disaster. But he has not built a strong, competitive, equitable economy. Rather, for reasons of political expedience and mindless loyalty, he became the exponent of policies that have led to debt and the stagnation of American living standards for all except the very rich. He knew what he was doing when he signed on to Reaganomics in 1980. He knew what he was doing when he asked us to read his lips. Now he has changed his mind again. The people shouldn't forget it, and the Democrats had better not let them.

HALF NELSON

There was a large element of generosity of spirit in the rapture with which America welcomed Nelson Mandela, and an equally large element of wishful thinking. The world is suddenly crowded with political heroes—in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, the Baltics, the Soviet Union, Burma, China, and Nicaragua—but Mandela aroused more enthusiasm among Americans than any of them. Why? Surely, in part, because he spent twenty-seven years in prison for his beliefs, survived, and emerged unembittered and willing to negotiate with those who robbed him of his best years. Surely, too, because his adversary is the apartheid regime of South

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Africa, legitimately deemed a ruthless, racist entity, and less legitimately deemed more wicked than the Communist governments resisted by other heroes.

But Mandela also was cheered so extravagantly in part because of the particularly American resonance of his struggle for racial equality. American blacks cheered because he is in a sense one of them and because, we suspect, they have so few other heroes. American whites cheered Mandela partly out of fellow-feeling with American blacks. Mandela's visit offered an opportunity for America to forget about Louis Farrakhan, Marion Barry, Bensonhurst, and the Central Park rape case and enjoy a moment of affirmation. The establishment media was only too happy to provide ecstatic and/or reverential commentary of a kind usually reserved for visits by a pope. It wasn't exactly unbiased journalism, but it helped the national mood.

Fortunately, the U.S. government did not get carried away by the festivities. When Corazon Aquino came to address a joint meeting of Congress in 1986, she was rewarded not just with standing ovations but with a huge hike in economic aid. Mandela got his ovations, but not a change in U.S. policy on economic sanctions. He hoped that Congress would give him de facto authority to decide when U.S. sanctions should be lifted, thereby strengthening his hand in negotiations with South African President F. W. de Klerk. All he won was informal assurance that his views would be considered.

The Bush administration remains convinced that if de Klerk takes the remaining steps required of him under U.S. law—releasing political prisoners, ending the state of emergency in Natal province, and entering negotiations—he deserves to be rewarded with a partial lifting of sanctions that will strengthen his hand against white reactionaries. Mandela claimed that he knows better than any American—or even de Klerk—what's best for de Klerk. Bush and Congress have determined, correctly, to decide for themselves.

Mandela is such an imposing figure, and skepticism about him seemed so churlish, that he was given the benefit of almost every doubt during his visit. Most Americans seemed to accept the reasoning behind his praise for Castro, Arafat, and Qaddafi: they've been his allies in tough times. It's assumed he understands they're no models for governing South Africa and won't be his principal foreign policy allies. It's assumed Mandela really knows that state socialism can't work and that he won't poison the atmosphere for investment in a rush to redistribute wealth. It's assumed he can contain violence-prone radicals who don't have his self-control. It's assumed he has the flexibility to yield points to de Klerk and South African whites in order to avoid racial warfare. It's assumed he can make peace with rival black leaders and avoid tribal warfare. If he does all this, the next time he comes he'll deserve to be treated as the foremost hero of our time. We hope he makes it.

Now that Mandela has gone, the question for Americans arises: Will his visit be forgotten, or lead to some new form of activism, especially by civil rights groups? We hope there is activism, properly directed. There will be a natural tendency to "follow Mandela" too literally and concentrate on expanding U.S. sanctions against South Africa, or in protesting what could be demagogically portrayed as "apartheid in America." But as Mandela knows his adversaries, so should America's black leaders. Here, illiteracy, poverty, drugs, teenage pregnancy, violence, and despair are as evil in their effects as South Africa's racist political system—and more difficult to combat because they are becoming embedded in black culture. Americans who fight against these enemies are doing the same work as Mandela, the work of liberation.

PATRONAGE, PLEASE

The Supreme Court says it is unconstitutional for the Republican governor of Illinois to discriminate against state employees who aren't Republicans. The recent 5-4 decision in the *Rutan* case isn't the first time the justices have discovered that the ordinary workings of political patronage somehow violate the First Amendment. There's reason to hope it will be the last time. Patronage hiring and firing is more respectable today than it was in 1976, when the Court first set out to abolish it. Most commentators reacted to *Rutan* by pointing out the practical virtues of patronage: it builds party discipline, gives ordinary citizens an incentive to get involved in politics. Justice Antonin Scalia's dissent, emphasizing these practical points, got the votes of the three most recently appointed justices.

What hasn't been emphasized is how wrong the Court is, not as a matter of pragmatism, but as a matter of principle. The Court's mechanistic logic runs like this: (*a*) the government shouldn't penalize people for their political views; (*b*) "A state job is valuable"; (*c*) if somebody loses a state job just because he is a Democrat or Republican, then he's being penalized for his views. Buzzers sound, lights flash: "First Amendment Violation!"

Sounds neat and tidy, until you realize that the whole point of having an election is precisely to penalize some people for their views. This is an even tidier principle. It's called democracy. It requires not just that voters can punish politicians for their political beliefs, but that voters can elect politicians capable of giving effect to beliefs the majority finds more compelling. That means whoever is elected must be able to appoint enough people to carry out his or her program—and dismiss enough of the "rascals" the voters voted to throw out.

How many rascals is that, and at what levels? In 1976 a plurality of justices said an incoming elected official might fire "policy-making and confidential employees." In 1980 even that grudging concession was qualified: the Court said a Democrat couldn't dismiss a Republican assistant public defender, even if public defenders make some policy. The test, the Court said, was whether politics was an "appropriate" requirement. (Clear enough for you?) The only jobs deemed "appropriate"

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for politics by the Court so far are a governor's speechwriters, press secretaries, and lobbyists. The justices have yet to concede that a president can exclude members of the opposing party from his Cabinet.

This is crazy. Presidents, mayors, and governors need to bring with them more than a few assistants and "policy-makers." They also need loyal, committed followers to *implement* their policies, up and down the bureaucracy. Suppose you were a president elected to clean up the environment. Would you want a corps of toxic waste inspectors recruited by your predecessor, who was a crusader for deregulation? Yes, it's undesirable (as opposed to unconstitutional) to have a pure patronage system, in which every manager and janitor is dismissed when the government changes hands. A tenured civil service has its virtues. Charles Peters, editor of *The Washington Monthly*, has proposed a "50-50 plan" in which the bureaucracy would be half civil service, half patronage. (Right now the federal bureaucracy is 99.9 percent civil service and 0.1 percent patronage.) The Peters plan might be a good compromise. But it's one the Court rules out.

"It is doubtful," the justices declare, "that the mere difference of political persuasion motivates poor performance" by government workers. Really? It's a strange, impoverished form of "political persuasion" that wouldn't affect performance. Aren't people more enthusiastic about carrying out policies they believe in? Isn't that enthusiasm part of the ideal of government service? You don't have to be a "policy-maker" to have convictions you consider important enough to act on. The Court would preserve government employees' freedom of political belief by draining those beliefs of any consequence.

NOTEBOOK

UNINDICTED CO-CONSPIRATORS: While Ollie North was shredding evidence, four Republican members of Congress were withholding important information from Congress too. According to North's notebooks, obtained through a Freedom of Information Act suit by the National Security Archive, Representatives Bill McCollum, Henry Hyde, Bob Stump, and Bob Livingston were briefed on March 4, 1985, by national security adviser Robert McFarlane about illegal efforts to raise funds for the contras from a third country. None of these flag-wavers stepped forward with this information during the congressional investigation into the affair, even though two of them—McCollum and Hyde—were members of the select committee doing the investigating. Their silence sheds light on more than their hollow rhetoric and posturing; it exposes their dishonesty with their colleagues and their willingness to hide their complicity in evading the law. While Congress was being lied to about the administration's subterranean foreign policy, these representatives were in the know. They were aware of clandestine policies that led to the criminal convictions of McFarlane and North. Their failure of responsibility toward the institution of Congress warrants a formal ethics investigation. Do McCollum and Hyde—and the others—still believe that their professed patriotism puts them above the law? Gentlemen, start your alibis. •

Lech makes trouble for his former friends.

WALESA'S WAR

By Anna Husarska

WARSAW

Electrician from Gdansk, Nobel Prize winner, union leader, de facto statesman. Lech Walesa has worn many hats but has always played a unifying role. In the past two months, however, he has declared an open war on the government that has effectively divided the country. Unless behind-the-scene efforts can bridge the gap, a final split seems inevitable among those who formed the movement that gave full meaning to its name, Solidarity.

From the first days in the Gdansk shipyard in 1980, Walesa was advised by highly respected intellectuals who recognized a unique chance in their cooperation with the workers. In the 1989 parliamentary elections, after candidates from the citizens' committees (the ad hoc Solidarity electoral branches) won an overwhelming victory, most of Walesa's intellectual advisers became part of the ruling class: deputies, senators, ministers. He remained president of Solidarity, the trade union, whose membership is one-fifth of what it was in its heyday in 1980-81.

Conflicts between Walesa and his former colleagues were probably inevitable. The government born from the union is introducing austerity measures that cause hardship for workers. But in a nation once strongly united against a common enemy, such developments are a source of great concern, something similar to what a child feels when he sees his parents in the midst of a divorce.

The first clash occurred in October 1989. After Tadeusz Mazowiecki became prime minister, his deputy at the union weekly was prevented from taking over the paper. Instead, Walesa appointed his own man, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, as editor in chief. In February Walesa named Zdzislaw Najder, a newcomer on the political scene, as head of Lech Walesa's Citizens' Committee (created back in 1988 by the cream of Polish opposition as a sort of shadow Cabinet). There had been no need for a designated head before; Bronislaw Geremek, formerly one of Walesa's closest advisers, was doing the job.

Shortly afterward Walesa began giving contradictory signals about his intention to run for the presidency, shifting almost daily from "I will" to "I won't." An

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opinion poll conducted by *Gazeta Wyborcza* in late April showed that more than 50 percent of those surveyed did not want him as president. This may have been a reaction to the vision of the office he presented. "A president could run around with an ax in his hand," Walesa said. He also offered a concept of parliamentary democracy that caused some worry, calling it "a peaceful war of everyone against everyone." Later he sharply criticized the Mazowiecki government, saying he was "ashamed of it"—a most embarrassing statement at a time when Poland is trying to appear stable in the eyes of foreign investors. He was more explicit for American readers, declaring to a *New York Times* reporter on June 9: "I believed in the Polish intellectuals and followed their advice. They misled me. That's why I . . . propose this concept of permanent political war."

The soldiers for this war are drafted from the Center Alliance, created on May 12. The group's founding declaration formally proposes Walesa as a candidate for president and expresses discontent with the slow pace of reforms. It was signed by sixty-nine people, most of whom are unknown to the general public. "Acceleration" is their key word. Accelerate changes in the economy, accelerate personnel matters—i.e., get rid of the Communists still in government posts—and accelerate parliamentary and presidential elections.

These are mostly populist slogans with no program to back them up. But in the current political climate, they may become popular in Parliament and among the public.

First, there are signs, such as a parliamentary debate over the fate of the disbanded Communist Party's possessions (real estate, pensions, cars), that demonstrate a growing desire for witch-hunting and revenge. Walesa's calls for "a general clean-up" have been enthusiastically received by his followers, whereas people like deputy Adam Michnik, who asked for moderation, have been branded "crypto-Communists."

Second, a battle cry is obviously needed to shake up the nation. The local elections of May 27 (the first free balloting in more than fifty years) confirmed the strength of the citizens' committees. But the turnout of only 42 percent indicated general apathy.

Finally, demands for economic acceleration are increasingly attractive. During the local elections a railway strike over salary issues paralyzed part of Poland for several days. In June milk producers blocked an international road, and peasants occupied the Ministry of Agriculture. Walesa was instrumental in ending the first of these cases of labor unrest and recovered part of his lost popularity. Within days he launched a free-for-all attack on his former allies. He first dismissed Henryk Wujec, a veteran union activist, from his job as secretary of the Citizens' Committee for being too sympathetic to the government. When Wujec responded that he could be recalled only by the Committee, Walesa retorted, "Consider yourself dismissed."

Gazeta Wyborcza printed this exchange, and Michnik, the editor in chief, was the next to be fired. Yet *Gazeta* is published privately, so here again Walesa missed his shot. He was no more successful in stripping *Gazeta* of the "Solidarity" logo in its nameplate. The logo is part of the slogan, "There is no freedom without 'Solidarity.'" (Some wits at *Gazeta* say that once the logo is taken away the first part of the slogan will have a meaning of its own.)

Mazowiecki is trying hard to make his economic reform program work. It's not easy, and he has to do it partly by trial and error. After forty years of Communist rule, the economy is in worse shape than ever before, with the defects of the socialist economy still in force and the disadvantages of market economy (unemployment, bankruptcies) already evident. Walesa offers no real plan to help the situation, and by throwing out fantasy promises of painless reform he encourages discontent.

A group of former intellectual allies of Walesa's confronted the Center Alliance at a meeting of Lech Walesa's Citizens' Committee on June 24. The meeting started as a nasty battle and nearly turned into a funeral for the Committee. One union leader asked, "What is this institution that uses Solidarity's shield and Walesa's mustache as a coat of arms?" The vice chairman of the Senate, once close to Walesa, pointed out that his latest statements are the source of social unrest reflected in opinion polls. Walesa answered, "Break the thermometer, mister, and you won't have a fever." At the end a letter signed by sixty-three people, mostly the original Committee members, was read suggesting that the Committee should disband. This didn't happen, and the battle will continue. But the ethos of solidarity was lost forever.

On July 1 Mazowiecki invited Walesa to discuss "what can be done to prevent the inevitable quarrels and fights from destroying the . . . common achievements of Solidarity." Walesa then proposed the time and place for the rendezvous: July 8, the Gdansk shipyard. This answer appears not so much a hand outstretched for accord as an invitation for a confrontation on ground that is favorable to Walesa.

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Gorbachev vs. the reactionaries.

PARTY SPOILERS

By Paul Quinn-Judge

MOSCOW

Predictions are rife that this week's Congress of the Soviet Communist Party will be a riveting clash between reformers and conservatives. The Congress is also being described, rightly, as the Party's last chance to transform itself or go under. But the Congress is really a sideshow—a ten-day distraction from the task of reforming the country that Mikhail Gorbachev can ill

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afford. As his own supporters concede, Gorbachev, and not just the Party, is running out of time.

At the Congress Gorbachev is fighting for the right to preside over the controlled destruction of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The Party, as it has been known for the past seventy years—the inner leadership of every aspect of life in the Soviet Union—is dying. It has ceased to be a significant force in many parts of the country, and Party reformers increasingly say that its future lies in political coalitions with other reform-minded parties, like the Democratic Party, a newly formed grouping that would occupy a centrist position in any Western political spectrum.

But for the time being the CPSU is still too dangerous simply to turn over to the conservatives. The Party has the structure, reach, and wealth of a totalitarian political organization. Through its network of Party committees it controls the KGB and the armed forces. It owns the lion's share of the mass media, including the best printing facilities nationwide. It has an impressive budget; even a middling regional newspaper contributes about 1 million rubles annually to the Party's exchequer. And it still has an impressive communications and administrative system covering the whole of the country. Reformers say they want to break these Party monopolies, but they're not quite sure how to do it.

Meanwhile the conservatives of the Congress, who seem to number about half the delegates, want a controlled destruction of perestroika. Their new spokesman is Ivan Polozkov, a diminutive, chatty Party chief from Krasnodar. He knows Gorbachev well: when the Soviet leader was first secretary in Stavropol, Polozkov was his desk officer in the Central Committee in Moscow. Gorbachev, he likes to say, needs to be a little tougher with people. The conservatives want a gentle rollback of the plans to introduce a market system. They would like to see the CPSU's leading role reasserted in a way that would almost certainly involve careful limitations on the activities of non-Communist groups. And they want the restoration of "traditional socialist values," such as respect for the armed forces.

Even at this stage in the disintegration of the traditional political system, however, it's far from clear that the conservatives will work up the courage to try to depose Gorbachev. He has put them in a bind: he has made it clear that his policies and his person are ultimately indivisible. If the policies go, so does he. This may ultimately turn out to be a bluff, but it has worked so far.

But if Gorbachev succeeds at routing the conservatives, he simply will have shored up his rear. The real problem is in the streets, where, as his close ally Aleksandr Yakovlev warned in a remarkable speech on the first day of the Congress, people are tired of the Party's esoteric arguments and back-biting. Gorbachev and his supporters are in fact faced with a dilemma of tragic simplicity: each new step in their efforts to reform the Soviet political system reinforces a widespread public feeling that the system is illegitimate. This rejection of the system has angered Party conservatives and benefitted radicals like Boris Yeltsin who are aiming to dismantle the system. And it has left Gorbachev inhabiting the political center, an empty and very lonely place.

Gorbachev's dilemma, of course, is of his own making, and has been particularly visible since the parliamentary elections of March 1989. The decision to create a real, working legislature probably will be seen as one of his greatest legacies. But it also marked the beginning of his time of troubles. Until then Gorbachev had shown himself to be a brilliant manipulator of the totalitarian system. He had gathered around him a group of advisers—thinkers like Yakovlev, Georgy Shakhnazarov, and Anatoly Chernyaev, whose unorthodox views had frequently damaged their careers in the past. By the first part of 1988 he had evolved a series of political reforms that, as Shakhnazarov now says, aimed to bring the Soviet Union "back into Europe."

The reforms were heretical, but Gorbachev knew how to use the system. Democratic centralism had hammered into the Party and its handmaidens a tradition of unquestioning obedience to the top leadership. "If you told our troops to blow up the General Staff," a recently retired officer of the KGB border troops recalled, "they'd be a little puzzled, but they'd obey. Orders are orders." And Gorbachev, using a combination of democratic centralism and personal mesmerism, has successfully induced the Party to abolish most of its political powers.

But everything changed too fast. The 1989 elections revealed a depth of hostility to the system that no one suspected. It was summed up by the graffiti on election posters in Kiev: "Your duty is to cross out the name of the Party candidate." Gorbachev's strategists were not heartbroken at the humiliation of so many Party candidates and military commanders. But they were unpleasantly surprised by the speed with which the new parliaments, first in Moscow, then in the regions, began to assert their independence. One of Gorbachev's aides admitted that they had miscalculated: "We just didn't think that the authority of a Soviet leader would be devalued so fast." They were hoping for a grace period of a year or two, during which they could push through their policies with the support of a compliant parliament.

Since March 1989 Gorbachev has been fighting, with only partial success, to regain his political balance. Even more important, he delayed making critical decisions about reforms. Nearly all the policies he is now trying desperately to implement have been on his desk for at least a year. Radical changes in relations with the Baltics and other republics, for example, were under consideration early last year. Then the proposals would have tempted, say, Lithuania. Now it's too late.

In early 1989, Shakhnazarov recalls, Gorbachev's advisers almost persuaded him to assume the broad presidential powers that he finally obtained a year later. The plan was to re-establish his authority with 100 days of resolute presidential rule. Instead, by a supreme irony, he became hopelessly bogged down in the dispute with Lithuania. The loss of a year may yet prove fatal. His

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supporters in the hierarchy say that he will emerge from the Congress "stronger than ever." Most expect him to form an alliance with Yeltsin against the conservatives.

But he will have to move very fast indeed. Brilliant politician though he is, Gorbachev may have no more than a few months to assemble a new power base or gradually turn into the Soviet equivalent of Wojciech Jaruzelski.

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The hateful oratory of Minister Farrakhan.

CALL TO HARM

By Andrew Sullivan

Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam came to Washington last week for two addresses on consecutive nights at the city's Convention Center. They were billed in advance as "The Voice of Truth in a Time of Trouble." In the course of the two evenings, Farrakhan was joined on the podium by, among others, Tawana Brawley (now with a Muslim name); George Stallings, the formerly Catholic priest accused of child molesting; Representative Gus Savage of Illinois, facing charges of sexual misconduct; and Mayor Marion S. Barry, now on trial for perjury and drug possession.

To add to the effect of a bad dream, both Stallings and Brawley sported voluminous, purple vestments: hers included a large, gilt-edged Muslim headdress, his an ankle-length bishop's robe. Barry himself was wearing a kind of African stole, wrapped around the shoulders of an elegant Italian-style suit. They were all flanked by bow-tied heavies and women in white robes.

Staring up at these visions of victimhood were 15,000 or so middle-class types, all black, crammed into the building on three sloping stands. Apart from the melodramatic frisking at the doors, there were very few signs to begin with that this was anything more than a typical gathering for some banal convention.

Any delusions on that score were dispelled when Barry was introduced. The hitherto passive crowd suddenly erupted into hooting and stamping. Farrakhan came next, and the hysteria moved effortlessly up another notch. The entire hall was on its feet, a mass of raised, clenched fists furiously punching the air, chants of "Woof! Woof! Woof!" drowning out the public address system. When Farrakhan moved over to clasp the mayor to his light tan suit, there was another burst of acclaim.

And then hush. Farrakhan is a skilled speaker, and he hardly flagged during the hour-long address. He starts in low, melodic tones: formal, gentle, hypnotic. He smiles the smile of the man who knows his routine and audience, who coasts into the third and second gear of his rhetoric, secure in the knowledge of the emotion it will soon unleash. For a moment, though, after the invocation of Allah, the language is admonitory. He laments the troubles of the black community: drugs, crime, incest, AIDS, abuse of women. He sounds for a surreal moment like a neoconservative. But then the enemies emerge, the call for self-improvement segues into a litany of resentment: of the wicked criminal justice system, the evil of white America, the perfidy of the Jews.

His speech on the first night focused on two figures, two people converted into an opportunity. Nelson Mandela was the first. Outside the convention hall, shirts for sale depicted Mandela's and Farrakhan's faces under the slogan: "Join Onto Our Own." Leaflets showing Mandela and Qaddafi in Tripoli in May 1990, arms around each other, were titled: "True Brothers in the Struggle." They continued: "Zionism is Racism. . . . Smash Zionism. Smash Zionism's Attempt To Control Mandela."

Mandela had just left town, and Farrakhan was not slow to draw parallels with himself. "Here was a man who did not teach necessarily by precept," he intoned, "but most assuredly taught by example." He defended Mandela's disavowal of nonviolence: "Here stood a man who would not bow. Here was a man who with all his sagacity and skill put Mr. Koppel in his place." The crowd guffawed. "The morning after, the papers should have echoed" (and here he mimicked Mandela's accent) "Did — I — paralyze — you — Mr. — Koppel?" People dissolved into derisive laughter. They were soon brought back to indignation. "How dare this wicked white Congress compare Mandela to a terrorist? They wouldn't dare say Menachem Begin was a terrorist when he blew up those hotels in Palestine in order to expel the British!" And then quietly: "They forget about these things. They hate to see a black man respected by his own. . . . I would have loved to have met Mr. Mandela, but they did not invite me. And you know why?" He paused. "Freedom fighter plus freedom fighter equals freedom fighter to the second power!" As his voice peaked, the stands began to sway under the thousands of stamping feet.

The second figure was Marion Barry. The mayor was sitting behind Farrakhan, occasionally mopping his brow in the familiar Barry fashion, and clapping. Farrakhan turned around to greet him. "Washington is in pain," he began, "because our brother the mayor is in great pain." And then, in a sly, slow-paced tease: "I have to say a few words about this." The crowd laughed and cheered. "Black politics is a threat to white racism," he declared. "Could this be the reason for the attack upon our mayor?" The audience hooted derision. "He sinned," he went on. "Are there any in this audience who have not?" Shouts of "no" rippled across the hall.

For Farrakhan, a strict Muslim, Barry's alleged sins of drug abuse and adultery were apparently small fry. He

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had no doubt about the real issue at hand. "Our mayor's head is bloody but unbowed. We know he's under attack. We know *why* he's under attack." The crowd roared in agreement. And then the kicker: "If he were white, he might have blown his brains out by now!" At this, the clenched fists began punching the air with abandon. For the first time the enemy had been named. Contempt merged into hate. "God is going to defeat the United States government! I want the mayor to run, Barry, run!" The crowd yelled back again: "Woof! Woof! Woof!" The stamping began once more. "This is our brother," Farrakhan shrieked above it. "I don't care *what* comes out. Just remember that our accuser is guilty of the worst crimes of humanity!"

He then spoke as a prophet. It was a curious rhetorical device, but an effective one. "The Honorable Elijah Muhammad said to me, put your own black people in office, but make them accountable. He did not like black politicians going into politics and selling us out. He said, if they sell us out, they should be killed." The crowd bridled a little at this, their shouts dying down. He went on: "I'm only telling you what he told me. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad said they should do that as an example for the others. . . . There's a way we can deal with our sellouts without hurting them physically. When a body is dead, it starts stinking and you put it away."

The following night the crowd had dwindled somewhat, but the drama increased. Barry showed up with his wife and young son, Christopher, who sat perched facing the screaming crowd for nearly three hours. That afternoon, the tape of Barry's Vista Hotel arrest on charges of drug possession had been released to the public: nearly two hours of bathetic, embarrassing testimony to his sordid private life, culminating in his dragging on a crack pipe and being forced up against a wall by FBI agents. (Farrakhan had made an attempt to attend the trial but was turned down by the judge on the grounds that his presence would be intimidating.) Gus Savage helped open the program. In his brief remarks to the crowd, he said he hoped they would soon have "elected representatives who are more afraid of *you* than they are of white Americans and Jewish Americans."

This time Farrakhan spoke for nearly three hours. He began once again with Barry. "What they're doing to the mayor is overkill," he ventured. But this time his point became an elaborate analogy: "There is no better example of crucifixion in the modern era than Marion Barry." Slowly the parable unfolded. He spoke graphically of nails in the hands and feet, of public derision and slow, agonizing death. It climaxed with the villain: "There is always a Judas in the circle of those whom white men fear," Farrakhan intoned to a growing chorus of assent. "And just for thirty pieces of silver and a promise that we won't prosecute you . . ." His sentence was cut off by sudden, wild stamping. Another mass of fist-clenched arms jerked upward. "You saw the tape," he went on. "They said, 'Mr. Mayor, we're going to read you your rights.' " Shouts of contempt could be heard around the hall. He notched his voice up an octave: "Well, the day's soon coming when we're going to read white folk their rights!" The place exploded: everyone rose to their feet, shouting and punching the air. Farrakhan yelled above them: "For just as surely as there is a crucifixion, there is a resurrection! Let us stand and defend our brother and take him down from the cross!"

By now Farrakhan had seized the microphone and was walking with it, his arms sometimes close to his body, sometimes lurching out into fantastic contortions, as the crowd raved and subsided in synchrony with his cadences. The control was stronger than a rock concert, more seductive than a political rally; it demanded less response than communion. Even its essential comedy didn't take the edge off: four bow-tied bodyguards flanked Farrakhan, sitting on stools, standing up each time the audience rose to its feet, like a hapless Motown backing group. But the effect was of a morbid hallucination: silly as well as ugly, ridiculous as well as chilling.

Curiously enough, though, the obscenity of it all creeps up on you slowly. You start with allowances, trying to account for the conventions of an alien world. But slowly, the rhetoric grows more vile, the threatened violence more insistent. At one point, Farrakhan ranted for nearly half an hour about "sellouts": "We have blacks who have $750 suits, who stroll into white folks' offices and scratch a little ass. . . . These people would never pick up a gun, except to do what Carl Rowan did and shoot someone who was playing in his pool."

Then there's the self-righteousness masquerading as integrity. It starts as being arresting. How many other black leaders, after all, are prepared to speak as openly about drugs, rape, and incest among blacks? But it soon turns lame, then sinister. At one point on the second night, Farrakhan spoke—amazingly—of his tolerance: "You can always count on me," he said, addressing his black critics, "like a faithful toilet you can sit your big black ass down on and dump on and I will say nothing because I love you and I was made to take a lot of stuff. . . . But I can't take it no more. I'm going to make war on those who make war on you! I'm going to pull their cover! Jesus said, think not that I come to bring peace. I come to bring a sword!"

The thuggery of the man goes some way to explaining why many blacks are afraid to criticize him openly. Days afterward, it isn't the surrealism of the event that lingers, so much as this. Farrakhan is at bottom a street tough. His first violence is directed against blacks who rival him. His second is against an abstract entity as invisible as I was to the people around me. Referring to the trials of American blacks over the centuries, he ended his rants with the declaration: "All white America could be asked to die to equal the score."

That Farrakhan should quote the Gospels or the Koran makes him not less but more horrific. That he should cynically channel people's desire for self-help into hate is a tragedy second only to the desperation of those he

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appeals to. But saddest of all, perhaps, are the suspects he paraded on the stage that night—a Greek chorus to the ideology of victimhood he espouses—and the thousands of middle-class blacks screaming identification with their fate. The presence of Marion Barry made the occasion, in retrospect, perfect: the ultimate symbol of the syndrome of self-destruction and self-indulgence. The only consolation, I suppose, is that there really are no further depths to which the mayor can now sink.

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The latest legal fad.

THEORY OF CHOICE

By Robert F. Nagel and Jack H. Nagel

Quick now, this is a pop quiz: Can you state Arrow's Theorem? Define the axiom of independence of irrelevant alternatives? Show how single-peakedness prevents cyclicity? If you've drawn a blank so far, don't worry. You still pass if you can identify three rent-seeking factions.

Give up? Then you haven't mastered the esoteric language of public choice theory, which attempts to explain politics by using the tools of economics. You also probably haven't spent much time the past few years hanging around major universities, where public choice has been in vogue. One of its founding fathers, economist James Buchanan, won the Nobel Prize in 1986.

More significant, unless you bone up fast on public choice, in a few more years you may not be able to pass your local bar exam. Like other intellectual fashions (deconstructionism, for one), public choice has made the leap from the academic departments to the law schools, and from there to the judiciary. What was an innovative analytic tool for unworldly scholars is now in the hands of dazzled lawyers, where it might actually have an effect. That effect will almost certainly be bad—a shrinking role for elected officials, an inflated role for the courts. Oddly (or perhaps not so oddly), lawyers of the left and right are joining in this enterprise.

Much of public choice theory simply restates, in more rigorous and pretentious terms, what most people already recognize: that broad public interests are often forgotten or sacrificed as special interests prevail over the unorganized; that the legislative process can produce peculiar results as politicians, bureaucrats, and pressure groups opportunistically strike deals and betray principles. These ideas hold special attraction for conservative free market types who see government mainly as the source of dirty little subsidies and artificial monopolies. (Those pursuing such monopolies are branded "rent-seekers," rent being the technical term for monopoly profits.)

Other aspects of public choice theory seem strange and counterintuitive. Arrow's Theorem (for which economist Kenneth Arrow won the Nobel in 1972) shows that democratic political outcomes can perversely reflect not the majority's true preferences, but the sequence in which choices are presented, and the way they are combined. The theorem says a majority's will can be accurately expressed only under conditions that, some argue, are unlikely. One condition ("single-peakedness") requires that all the relevant political disagreements divide neatly along a single ideological cleavage—as if, say, all blue-collar Democrats who are liberal on economic issues were also liberal on social issues such as abortion. The eminent political scientist William Riker and others go even further. Extrapolating from controversial extensions of Arrow's work, they argue that all electoral and legislative majorities are essentially "arbitrary," and that the notion of a collective will or intent is therefore literally "meaningless."

It didn't take long for lawyers to grasp the potential of public choice. Traditional constitutional theory has always cited the danger of majority tyranny when explaining the power of unelected judges to overrule elected legislatures. Yet it also traditionally sees the legitimacy of majority decisions as a reason to restrict that judicial power carefully. The familiar theme is that the majority rules as long as it doesn't interfere with basic rights such as free speech. Since the 1930s, although judges have invoked the Constitution on a wide variety of non-economic issues (such as abortion), respect for political decisions has prevailed at least in the economic realm. But if all political majorities are just arbitrary, the outcomes of democratic political processes lose their legitimacy, and *everything* becomes fair game for the (supposedly) wiser deliberations of judges. That seems to be a conclusion with broad appeal, at least among law professors.

On the right, for example, University of Chicago professor Richard Epstein argues that in the rough, greedy world of legislative politics, the winners help themselves to everyone else's property, penalizing work and risk-taking and bringing about inefficient allocation of resources. Courts, he says, should cast aside their post-New Deal timidity on economic issues in order to correct laws (such as the progressive income tax) that do not sufficiently respect private property rights.

Another conservative, federal Judge Frank Easterbrook, uses public choice arguments in a more insidious, and perhaps more significant, way. Epstein merely tries to convince courts to strike down laws that violate his idea of the Constitution. But what if courts were to disregard legislative judgments that are admittedly constitutional? Easterbrook says the legislative process is so messy and irrational that there is really no such thing as "legislative intent" behind a statute. There are only expedient compromises, usually made by special inter-

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ests trying to get a cheap lunch at the expense of other interest groups or taxpayers. Therefore, judges should apply most statutes narrowly only to those circumstances actually foreseen and specifically covered by the statute's language.

Easterbrook's doctrine does reflect healthy skepticism about the way judges divine "legislative intent." The alleged proof of that intent is all too often a sentence inserted by a congressional aide in the middle of a committee report that few members of Congress read before voting on the law in question. But Easterbrook's ideas have their own potential for distorting democracy. He thinks judges should decide whether a statute represents "general-interest legislation" or "private-interest legislation"—and in the latter case they would enforce the law "without enthusiasm." The effect would be to leave a much greater part of a society's affairs to be governed by the free market and judge-made common law. Easterbrook's example of a private-interest statute is the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, the law that sets out comprehensive standards for the safe manufacture and use of radioactive materials. A theory that condones "unenthusiastic" enforcement of this statute is rather ominous.

You'd expect liberal lawyers to scorn public choice, given its right-wing associations. But they too have been unable to resist a theory that offers such a potent justification for shifting power to the courts. Most notably, Harvard professor Laurence Tribe has begun to mine public choice to support liberal constitutional activism. In the second edition of his constitutional law treatise, Tribe says that though the judicial process is somewhat antidemocratic, the political process is only "imperfectly democratic." He cites the University of Chicago's Cass Sunstein for reminding him that Arrow's Theorem puts "the burden of persuasion on those who assert that legislatures (or executives) deserve judicial deference as good aggregators of individual preference."

On the left, as on the right, the greatest effect of public choice comes in interpreting statutes that everyone agrees are perfectly constitutional. Here the liberals actually go further than their conservative counterparts. Easterbrook at least insists that judges should remain the "faithful agents" of the legislature, implementing (even if "unenthusiastically") unambiguous bargains expressed in the statutory text and leaving the revision of statutes to the political process. But some liberal scholars would deny politicians even that role.

A key case is the Supreme Court's 1979 decision in *United Steelworkers of America* v. *Weber*. At issue was a labor agreement requiring that at least 50 percent of trainees for skilled craft jobs be black. As a result, some white workers were excluded from the program despite their seniority over all the blacks enrolled. This seemed to fly in the face of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which made it illegal "to discriminate against any individual because of his race . . . in admission to . . . any . . . apprenticeship or other training [program]." In the debates preceding the bill's enactment, its sponsors made it clear they intended to ban "reverse discrimination," asserting on numerous occasions that their purpose was to "prevent . . . employers from discriminating against *or in favor of* workers because of their race. . . ." [Italics added.] Nevertheless, the Supreme Court found the voluntary affirmative action program legal. Casually citing a "familiar rule" that statutes may not mean what they say, it announced that Congress's "primary concern" was increasing employment for blacks, not enforcing a principle of nondiscrimination.

Now, providing employment for blacks is surely a worthy objective. You can argue it's so important as to justify the use of racial preference. But even sympathy for the substance of affirmative action should not obscure the danger of cases like *Weber*. The issue wasn't whether blacks should get job preference. It was whether courts must honor the fundamental commitments repeatedly and clearly made in legislative debates and manifested in plain statutory language. Suppose a different law were being interpreted—one that after urgent expression of legislators' intentions clearly required all nuclear reactors to meet elaborate safety requirements before they could be licensed. And suppose a court (explaining, as Easterbrook has in fact written, that "there is no good evidence that the [Atomic Energy Act] produces benefits on balance") were to disregard those clear requirements in order to reduce monopolistic tendencies in the nuclear industry. Easterbrook might avoid pushing his ideas so far, but not if he followed the example of *Weber*.

Unfortunately, *Weber*'s admirers on the left have begun not only to defend its result, but to hold it up as a model of the proper judicial attitude toward the legislative process. William Eskridge Jr., a professor at Georgetown Law School, has propounded a theory called "dynamic interpretation." His idea is that courts should impede the influence of special interests by reading statutes "in light of current societal needs and evolving legal policy." What if the people's elected representatives don't agree that "current societal needs" require anything of the sort? No problem for the dynamic judge. After all, lots of erudite public choice theorizing has gone into proving that legislatures don't reflect the majority's will anyway. Indeed, the Court should *improve* on the seedy political process by "filtering" and "transforming" political preferences—even when, as in *Weber*, it leads them to apply a statute in a way that contradicts the clear intentions of those who voted on it.

What, then, is the U.S. Congress doing when it enacts a law—in *Weber*'s case one of the most significant laws of this century? Alexander Aleinikoff, another progressive legal scholar, happily provides a metaphoric answer. He says Congress is launching a ship. Although the legislators might have in mind some destination for the ship that they slip into the water, "The ship's ports-of-call, safe harbors, and ultimate destination may be a product of the ship's captain . . . and other factors. . . ." We have

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to guess at what those "other factors" might be, but by now it should be pretty clear who the ship's captain is. Under this analysis, judges could erode the meaning of even the most specific statutory language over time if they decide conditions have changed.

Why have lawyers and judges from opposite sides of the political spectrum joined in endorsing a set of ideas that enhances the power of lawyers and judges? A cynic, or a truly disinterested public choice theorist, might smell some "rent-seeking" in the air. A less cynical view would hold that the left and right are learning the wrong lessons from each other, and from public choice theory. Instead of converging on an appreciation of the broad cultural influences that protect constitutional values (such as free speech and private property) despite imperfections in the legislative process, they seem headed toward a joint repudiation of majoritarian politics itself.

Ironically, just when lawyers are embracing these anti-democratic ideas, the fashion back in academia is changing. The latest arguments now suggest that legislative outcomes are often majoritarian and far from chaotic, that political leaders frequently act out of a desire to win approval from broad constituencies or even (shockingly) out of beliefs about what is good public policy. To the extent this is so, the real value of public choice theory isn't to discover dismal iron laws of politics, but rather to show how badly things can turn out if shortsighted selfishness is permitted to dominate. Voters and their representatives might then discover correctives, as they did when they created public interest lobbies, deregulated airlines and other industries, and passed tax reform—all actions that rigid public choice theorists would have said could never happen.

These political correctives require a vigorous political culture. They won't occur if courts take general responsibility for improving on legislation. If judges are to captain our ship, they may sometimes take us to attractive destinations. But like children carried along for the ride, we won't deserve any of the credit, we won't learn much along the way, and we won't know what to do when the helmsman goes astray.

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A terrible beauty is torn.

KASHMIR SCARS

By Ayesha Jalal

A glistening prize, a tantalizing dream, a festering sore, Kashmir is the fairy tale that tortures the South Asian psyche. "Like some supremely beautiful woman, whose beauty is almost impersonal and above human desire . . . Kashmir in all its feminine beauty . . . seemed . . . dreamlike and unreal, like the hopes and desires that fill us and so seldom find fulfillment," wrote Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1940, after a twenty-three-year absence from his ancestral land. Nehru likened Kashmir to the "face of the beloved that one sees in a dream and that fades away on awakening." Instead of fading, however, the object of unrequited love was to become his obsession.

Another enchanted suitor—Pakistan—tried to lure Kashmir with better religious credentials for an arranged marriage. Tribal and *biraderi* (patrilineal kinship group) ties appeared to strengthen the religious bond, and for a fleeting moment Pakistan nearly succeeded in snatching the prize from the besotted Brahman. But religious and familial emotions were no match for the persevering Pandit, especially when he abandoned political poetics for military theatrics. In 1949, after a war, about a third of the territory became Azad Kashmir, or Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The rest remained Jammu and Kashmir, or India-occupied Kashmir.

Seeing the beloved in the infidel's embrace sparked a psychic conflagration in Pakistan. Without the "k," meant to stand for Kashmir when the name was coined, Paistan (pronounced Pioustan, the land of the holy) was not quite Pakistan (the land of the pure). Undoing the unholy union became a matter of life and death. But it entailed more death than life, since the infidel's iron grip was much stronger than all the sophisticated armory the forlorn suitor could buy. And so the loss of Kashmir continued to rankle, erupting into two more

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short bloody wars, in 1965 and 1971, until observers of the spectacle managed to separate the antagonists.

Whatever psychological, physical, and political scars India and Pakistan have suffered over Kashmir, it is Kashmir that has invariably suffered more. Since January there has been a full-scale and popularly backed insurgency in the Valley. New Delhi's charges of Pakistani complicity notwithstanding, Kashmiris in masses are openly demanding secession from the Indian union. The current nightmare stems from the long-standing denial of self-determination, of the elementary right to choose whether to form a union at all, and if so with whom. The demand is being articulated variously by more than thirty groups—ranging from the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front's call for a secular and sovereign Kashmir to the fundamentalists' cry for an Islamic state closely aligned with Pakistan.

For this reason, the obsessive dimension in Indian and Pakistani attitudes toward Kashmir must be exorcised. The focus must be on Kashmir and its people. The challenge, and it is a formidable one, is to reconcile the principle of self-determination with the realities of regional power. If this challenge is not addressed urgently, the subcontinent and the world may well be plunged into a nuclear crisis.

Neither India nor Pakistan explicitly denies the principle of self-determination for Kashmiris. The conflict springs from different interpretations of the principle. Under the terms of the British transfer of power in 1947, Kashmir had to choose, like the other 560-odd princely states, between the two dominions. Independence was not an option. In the wake of Muslim tribal incursions from the northwest frontier (which were surreptitiously abetted by Pakistan), Kashmir's Hindu maharajah, Hari Singh, decided to cast his lot with the predominantly Hindu Indian union. United Nations resolutions in 1948 and 1957 called for a plebiscite in Kashmir, on the basis of the same principle. So both India and Pakistan have argued that there was never a third formal alternative of a sovereign and independent Kashmir. There have been unofficial hints that Pakistan now may be willing to consider an independent Kashmir, but they have been contradicted by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. India has remained emphatically opposed to the idea, on both legal and pragmatic grounds.

In fact, India has stolidly refused to countenance any arguments questioning the legality of Kashmir's accession. Yet its legality has never been accepted by Pakistan. More to the point, it was seen as provisional by the Lion of Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, who was the most influential of Kashmiri leaders from pre-independence days until his death in 1982. (The Sheikh oscillated during his long career between demanding Kashmiri independence and accepting an autonomous status for Kashmir within the Indian union.) Pakistan's claim on Kashmir on grounds of a common religious bond may be rejected for being parti pris. In any case, there has never been a neat equation between Kashmiri nationalism and the Islamic aspirations of the 3.3 million Muslims residing in the Valley; a sense of Kashmiri identity based on language, culture, and the environment has been as strong, if not stronger, than the ties of religious affiliation. The fact that it was Nehru himself who first proposed the idea of a plebiscite in November 1947, enabling Kashmiris to exercise their right to self-determination, lends credence to the notion that accession was provisional.

India's retort is well known: Pakistan's subsequent occupation of Azad Kashmir altered everything, leaving Nehru with no choice but to retreat from his position on a plebiscite. But this retort overlooks a small detail: Nehru's promise to the Kashmiris was not contingent on Pakistan's displaying good neighborly behavior.

Three arguments have been aired against satisfying Kashmiri demands for self-determination. First and most extreme, there is the view that by acceding to India, Kashmiris have become a subnational group, and so their claims of self-determination cannot be given the same weight as those of subject populations under colonial rule. In other words, the principle of self-determination does not have universal applicability. Gorbachev would endorse such a formulation wholeheartedly. Unfortunately for New Delhi and Moscow, neither the Kashmiris nor the Lithuanians agree that colonialism is at an end.

Then there is the argument that Kashmiris have exercised their right to "self-determination" by voting in four general elections. But these elections were to elect members of the state legislature within the framework of the Indian union, and even these elections, especially those of 1987, have never been free or fair.

The more moderate view is that it is too late to question the legality of Kashmir's accession to India. The only realistic solution is to give Kashmir greater autonomy based on an overall revision of federal and state relations in India. But the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party has been calling for the revocation of Article 370—the symbol of Kashmir's special constitutional status in the Indian union—which restricts the settlement and the acquisition of property in the state by non-Kashmiris. With this party holding the balance in India's hung Parliament, adjustments in federal-state powers are unlikely to satisfy the aspirations of Kashmiri militants.

And even if New Delhi manages to dampen Kashmiri sentiments and reaches an agreement on the basis of greater autonomy, especially financial, within a significantly adjusted federal-state framework, the possibility of renewed troubles will remain so long as a section of Kashmir remains under Pakistani military occupation. This is more probable now that Pakistan's monopoly over the instruments of coercion has been seriously dented by a sprawling arms and drugs economy: the flow of weapons in this region no longer requires state patronage. Moreover, with resurgent Islam spilling over international frontiers, Pakistan is no longer the sole potential patron of Kashmiri militants.

Given the rapidly changing regional and internation-

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al environment, it would be myopic to believe that the existing configurations of power can determine what is a "realistic" solution of the Kashmir problem. Just as there can be no solution based on the principle of self-determination alone, none can be made to stick unless both India and Pakistan show flexibility in accommodating the new and emerging realities.

The current agitation, coming at a time when Bhutto's government was gearing for a détente with New Delhi, has embarrassed Islamabad. Once officialdom in Islamabad recovered from the initial shock, the ruling troika—Bhutto, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, and the army chief of staff, General Aslam Beg—reiterated the old Pakistani line of self-determination for Kashmiris, but carefully obfuscated the distinction between Kashmiri nationalism and Muslim separatism. New Delhi's virulent reactions to these Pakistani statements are understandable but misplaced. Pakistan cannot subscribe to India's version of the history of the Kashmir dispute. To interpret this as proof of Pakistan's involvement in Kashmir may be convincing propaganda for domestic consumption, but it does not address the source of the troubles in the Valley.

It is by no means clear that the Kashmiri militants—whether of the fundamentalist or the secular ilk—are angling for a confederation with Pakistan. Pro-Pakistani fervor may simply be the most potent symbol available to Kashmiris, one that dramatizes Kashmiri rejection of a union with India. India's bludgeoning the Valley into submission, far from eliminating pro-Pakistani sentiments, will create them, raising expectations in Azad Kashmir—and in Pakistani Punjab—of seeing all Kashmiris free of Indian control. Tribal and *biraderi* ties have resisted the disruptive effects of an arbitrarily imposed international frontier cutting across them. But expressions of concern and moral support for kinsmen across the border should not be taken as evidence of a subversive foreign hand. In Islamabad there seems to be a sense of the limits of power; circumspect state officials are not prepared to risk the future of Pakistan for a military adventure to regain a lost letter.

The voice of sanity seems to be drowning in the rhetoric of war, but there is still a trace of hope that moderation can prevail. What would be the contours of a political framework within which Kashmiri aspirations for self-determination will be satisfied while at the same time assuaging the fears and accommodating the interests of the two powerful states in the region? For a start, the principle of self-determination should no longer be seen as precluding independence and reunion between the two Kashmirs. Indeed, it may well be the only long-term solution, now that the Vale of Kashmir is awash with anti-Indian feelings. Indian hopes of pacifying Kashmiris with offers of larger development grants and greater autonomy may still seem to be the more sensible option, but it is only a stop-gap measure.

Pragmatists assert that an independent Kashmir will be economically unviable. They may be right, but depressing facts and figures have rarely put the spanner through nationalist sentiment. The campaign for an independent Bangladesh (which many pragmatists supported enthusiastically) did not hold out the promise of a glorious economic future. And the woeful tale of economic development in the Valley and Azad Kashmir belies any notion of a prosperous future for the two parts of Kashmir within the Indian or Pakistani fold.

According to defense strategists, an independent Kashmir will be the vulnerable extremity of the subcontinent, an easy prey for China and any other expansionist power. But surely keeping Kashmir subservient and divided between them may cost India and Pakistan a great deal more in blood and iron, entailing more instability for the subcontinent, than a reunified and independent Kashmir.

It has also been argued that an independent Kashmir, much less a reunified one, is simply impracticable without domestic political stability in India and Pakistan and a relaxation of regional and international tensions. Kashmiri unification and independence would create an unhealthy precedent for other subnational groups harboring separatist illusions. But unless these groups are being held under threat of coercion, there is no reason an independent Kashmir should precipitate the balkanization of the South Asian subcontinent.

Pragmatists add that an independent Kashmir will strengthen the hands of communal and fundamentalist ideologues in both countries. But surely it is more likely that unsatisfied Kashmiri aspirations would provide greater impetus to resurgent communalism and fundamentalism in India and Pakistan than an independent Kashmir based on the secularist principles now being enunciated by some of the more important militant groups in the Valley. These groups, particularly the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, have been espousing non-communal creeds and assuring non-Muslims full rights as equal citizens in a free Kashmir.

Given a measure of flexibility, the fears and the interests of the two main regional powers can be accommodated within a political framework for a reunified and independent Kashmir. The arrangement would be based on "sovereignty-association" with both India and Pakistan. This notion differs in essentials from the idea of an Indo-Pakistan condominium over Kashmir, which negates the right of Kashmiri self-determination. It is also at complete variance with the concept of a loose confederation between India, Pakistan, and Kashmir, which overlooks the great variations in the composition and character of these three political entities.

Sovereignty-association implies, first, the recognition of the national rather than simply the minority status of a distinctive community; and second, the negotiation of an association of this nation with a larger multinational state. Underlying this concept is a broad and imaginative interpretation of sovereignty. It is only an emphasis

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on power to the exclusion of principle, on the reality of existing states to the detriment of aspirations of peoples, which can sustain absolutist notions of sovereignty in today's world. A more relative perspective may lead to the notion of layers of sovereignty, and enable the much needed reconciliation of power with principle, of authority with freedom.

For sovereignty-association to work in Kashmir, India and Pakistan will have to agree to extend the right of self-determination to all Kashmiris—Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist. The features that have made the U.N. resolutions on a plebiscite unworkable for more than four decades must be altered. A plebiscite or referendum can be held first in Jammu and Kashmir, including Ladakh, to determine whether to remain with the Indian union or to opt for independence and possible union with Azad Kashmir. Leaving Azad Kashmir out of the first round of voting, and replacing the option of joining Pakistan with the option for independence, takes account of Indian fears; and if a free and fair vote is cast in favor of retaining the union with India, the Kashmiri right of self-determination will have been exercised.

India and Pakistan could then negotiate a treaty settling the boundary dispute once and for all. If a majority votes for independence, however, the union with India would stand annulled. In the event that Hindu-majority Jammu and Buddhist-majority Ladakh vote overwhelmingly against independence, despite an overall majority for independence, an allowance should be given for these regions to remain with India.

Azad Kashmir could then vote to decide whether to unite with the rest of Kashmir on the basis of a sovereignty-association with Pakistan. If both parts of Kashmir decide on independence, a constituent assembly of Kashmir as a whole will ratify the terms of association with the two regional powers. New Delhi and Islamabad can accommodate the new association within their constitutions. Indian and Pakistani troops will be withdrawn, and Kashmir declared a demilitarized zone with its territorial integrity guaranteed by both countries. (The terms of the sovereignty-association may allow India and Pakistan to maintain a limited military presence in Ladakh and the Afghan border respectively, to meet the strategic concerns of each country about potential threats emanating from outside the South Asian region.)

Admittedly, obsessive passions, fears, and suspicions are not easy to exorcise. Kashmir in all its natural splendor has elicited more possessive greed and murderous conflict than detached love. Kashmir today is a valley of despair in need of compassion from those who have been so enchanted by its spell. This proposal based on a dialectic of power and principle is an evocation of opportunity for a grand historic compromise on the subcontinent's most divisive issue. It will in all probability not immediately melt the frozen postures in New Delhi's and Islamabad's corridors of power. But it is being articulated boldly because a season must eventually come when the pure white of Kashmir is not stained with the blood of another young generation. •

South Africa's best hope for a democratic future.

TOWARD A CIVIL SOCIETY

By Steven Mufson

In South Africa nearly everyone has his own idea of how to shape a new constitution. Some people advocate majority rule in a unitary state, others a federal structure that would dilute central authority. Some want socialism, others a mixed economy. Some believe in racial safeguards (white schools, white parliamentary seats, minority group legislative vetoes), and others think that a strong judiciary and guarantees of individual liberty are the best protections for minorities. One activist is trying to fashion a public debate modeled on the Federalist Papers.

However, just as important as the nature of the post-apartheid state will be the nature of society *outside* the state. This society—"civil society"—has been both a base for overthrowing oppression and an embryo for a new nation. Its power has been demonstrated over the past decade in South Africa, as it has been in Eastern Europe, where organizations like Solidarity and Civic Forum not only undermined repressive regimes but established frameworks for new democracies. Though the South African government has held on to the tradi-

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tional levers of power—the Parliament, military, and civil service—in the 1980s it lost its grip on virtually all other aspects of society. South African opposition groups began to run trade unions, sports leagues, weekly newspapers, professional and civic associations, women's federations, youth, study, and church groups, printing presses, T-shirt factories, think tanks, and cultural committees.

Until recently this life outside officialdom in South Africa has occupied a gray area between illegality and legality. (In February the government unbanned the leading political and student organizations.) At times civil society seemed as much a state of mind as a state of being. But that was the source of its strength. People stopped waiting for freedom; they simply started thinking and acting freely within the narrow space available to them. By doing so they enlarged that space and came to be an overwhelming force against government excess.

Black South Africans have debated strategy, public policy, morality, and ideology. They have held their own elections for community and union leaders. And their independent organizations have responded to the bread and butter concerns of their constituents by fighting for better housing, schools, and working conditions. As early as 1983, long before anyone dreamed that the government would ever unban the major black political organizations (much less that Nelson Mandela would address a joint session of the U.S. Congress), a leading activist finished a prison sentence and was surprised to discover that informal associations had created an atmosphere "that invited free thought and free action-taking."

If civic associations, unions, and cultural, youth, and church groups continue to maintain their vitality and independence under majority rule, they can become bulwarks of democracy in a truly free South Africa. This will depend on what the ANC becomes, and how its relationship with these groups develops, especially if the ANC starts acting more like a political party after apartheid.

Within the ANC alliance, the relationships between the ANC and these free associations have become matters of debate. What should be the relationship between the ANC and black trade unions? Should someone like Cyril Ramaphosa, the ambitious general secretary of the mineworkers union, be able to serve on the ANC national executive committee without resigning his union post? What is the proper role of the church vis-à-vis the ANC? (Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu recently told his clergymen not to join the ANC or take up ANC posts because that would compromise the independence of the church. The ANC is trying to convince the Nobel Peace Prize winner to change his mind.) Should the press have any restrictions under a post-apartheid government? (Some ANC people want to silence extreme "racist" views.) Should the ANC regulate cultural activities? How should the ANC deal with rival groups like Inkatha and the Pan Africanist Congress?

One of the biggest questions is whether civic associations should merge with the ANC and become local ANC branches, or should they remain independent and more broad-based. At the moment there is a debate about whether COSATU, the biggest black union federation, will formally become part of the ANC or whether its leaders will sit on an expanded ANC executive committee. Women's groups, youth groups, and others among the 700 affiliates of the loose coalition that was called the United Democratic Front might formally submerge their identities into the ANC. The UDF has been supportive of ANC goals but has its own stature and was the driving force behind the black uprising in the mid-1980s.

This would alter the face of black politics. In fact, if any of the independent groups merged with the ANC, it might help unify black opinion for negotiations with the white government, but it could be a significant error of principle as well as strategy. If the ANC emerges as the ruling party, the eclipse of independent associations would mean there would be few countervailing forces. If the ANC proved corrupt, incompetent, or just unlucky in running the country, its failures could endanger the entire array of organizations painstakingly built to further freedom and social justice.

Some elements of the ANC may be eager to consolidate their hold on black politics. But social and political associations have not simply bowed to the will of the ANC, and the ANC often has been compelled to adapt to the views of its independent allies. Perhaps the most politically powerful of these, the trade unions, frequently asserts its independence. Last week, when the ANC called for a general strike, the smaller of the two big union federations, NACTU, didn't go along.

The most visible instance of trade union independence was on the critical issue of disinvestment. At an international conference in Botswana in early 1987, ANC leader Thabo Mbeki declared that American companies should pull out of South Africa, close their factories, and bring the South African government to its knees. The black trade unions disagreed and were asking U.S. companies to turn over their factories to black workers. Ford Motor Co. complied, giving its workers a quarter of the equity in its South African subsidiary when it disinvested. But Mbeki insisted that companies should close down altogether. "To keep operations going, whoever the owner, doesn't do what sanctions are supposed to do. The idea is to interrupt the functioning of the economy."

Mbeki told me he heard that a lot of trade union leaders were "embarrassed" about their earlier position, and he predicted that the black trade unions would fall into line with the ANC stance in six months, when COSATU was to hold its next national congress. But six months came and went and, after a fierce debate, the black trade unions didn't budge. Some trade union officials were openly annoyed with the ANC. Never mind

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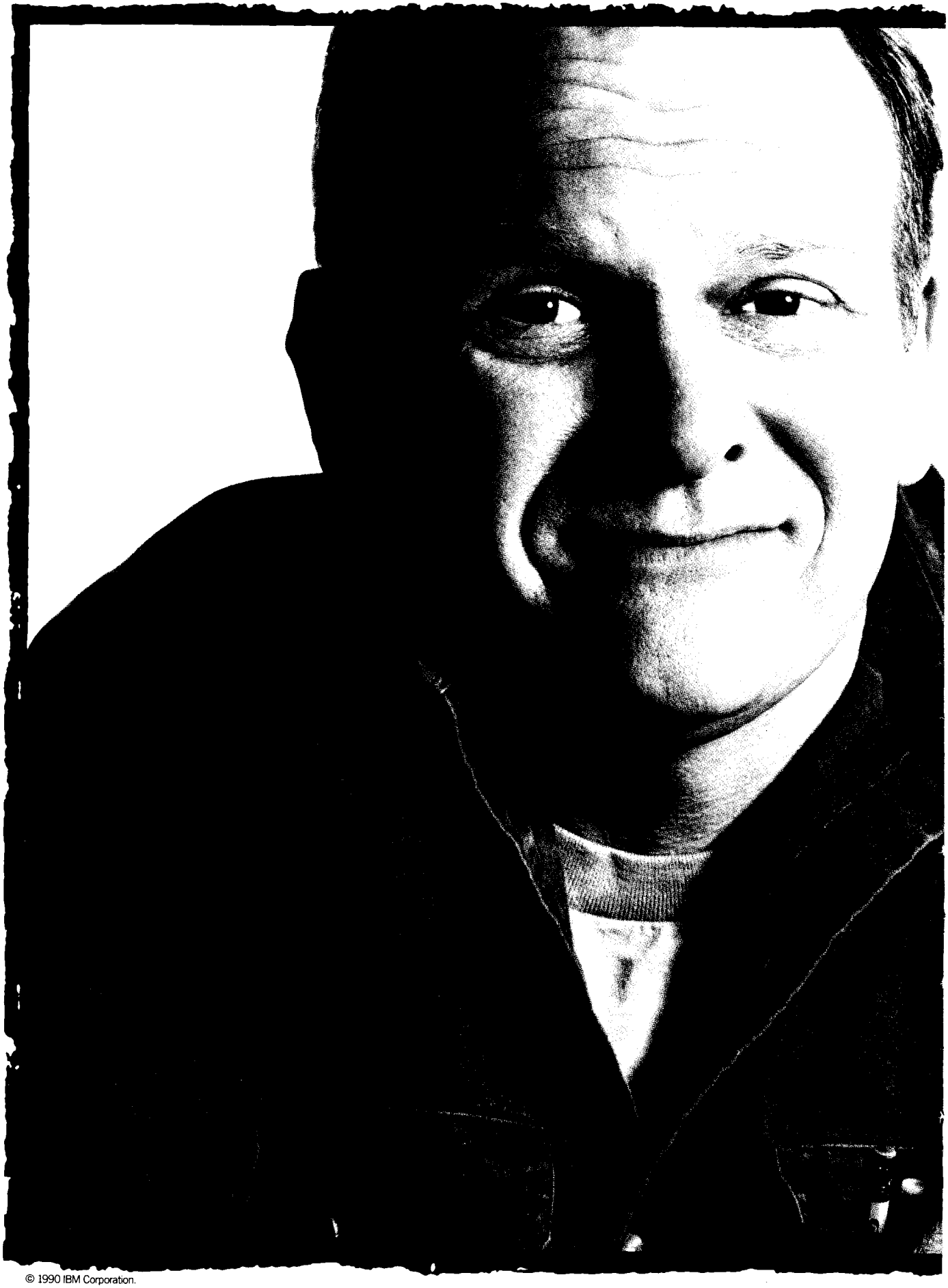

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weakening the economy, said an official of the mineworkers union. Didn't Mbeki care about weakening black trade unions? The mineworker official, who viewed black trade unions as the most potent agents of change in South Africa, also was upset by the scant mention made of black trade unions in ANC president Oliver Tambo's annual address on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the ANC.

In the long run, what mattered more than the union position on sanctions was how black trade union leaders saw their relationship with the ANC. They did not question its influence and popularity. COSATU president Elijah Barayi is an unabashed ANC sympathizer and former member. COSATU first vice president Chris Dlamini accompanied Mandela on his U.S. tour. "The ANC is a progressive organization fighting for liberation," said an official of a major union. "It is losing lives for the liberation of black people. If not the ANC, who will you go for? Where are your interests?" Yet as one union leader put it: "One should make links [with the ANC] before independence. But [unions] still will be there after independence to protect their members. They will stand on their own."

More than most organizations, the unions look ahead to a South Africa after apartheid. Because of their international links with foreign trade unions, many black union leaders are well traveled and versed in the dangers that lie ahead for them after liberation. In 1988 I met Tseliso Hlalele, the national education chairman of the National Union of Mineworkers, outside a ramshackle hotel in Maseru, the capital of Lesotho. His appearance lacked Mbeki's polish; his hair was going white, and he wore a T-shirt and dusty pants. He had been a mineworker like his father, starting at age eighteen and working for twenty-one years. He was in Lesotho tending to the needs of NUM members fired during the strike in 1987.

Hlalele had traveled to Britain, India, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. "When I was in Zimbabwe," he said, "there was a strike in a gold mine. The minister issued an ultimatum that they [miners] should go back to work or be dismissed. It is a mistake for the department of manpower to absorb the entire power of the trade union movement. For us, it's committing suicide." Similarly, the president of the mineworkers, James Motlatsi, told me: "Even after liberation, we must keep fighting for liberation. Even with an ANC government or nationalized mines, the workers' right to strike cannot be restricted."

Ultimately, the ANC listened. When it drew up constitutional guidelines later that year, it included a clause not mentioned in its 1955 Freedom Charter: the right to strike.

Other supporters of the ANC's struggle against apartheid have also battled with the ANC over its vision of a post-liberation society. In 1985 Tambo told the *Cape Times* that freedom of speech and the press would exist, but businessmen who met with ANC leaders in Zambia in 1986 said that Mbeki believed the press would have to be nationalized. In 1988 a member of the ANC group studying constitutional guidelines, Nat Masemola, told a group of academics in the United States: "There is no absolute freedom at any time. Especially during the transition period [after majority rule begins], we will not allow unlicensed press freedom. We cannot allow an irresponsible fourth estate. If the world chooses to condemn us, so be it; they have never supported us anyhow." Masemola called the obsequious, state-dominated Zambian press a model.

But the press can be just as adamant as the trade unions, and their protests have softened the views of some ANC leaders. Having started their own alternate publications in the face of government threats, many "progressive" journalists in South Africa have become fiercely independent and are likely to insist on a vigorous press. The small but influential *Weekly Mail* has just started daily publication. *The Sowetan* is edited by supporters of the PAC, the ANC's Africanist rival. Independent-minded journalists run three monthly magazines and a small publishing house. The alternative press in South Africa has done some of the hardest-hitting stories about the liberation movements of southern Africa, breaking critical stories about Winnie Mandela's thuggish bodyguards, coercion in the township schools, torture within the South West Africa People's Organization and the ANC's Angolan camps, and the intolerant cultural "commissars."

In the mid-'80s the ANC revived a cultural committee to influence the selection of theater and music that travels abroad from South Africa. Part of the committee's purpose was to make it easier for South African artists to show their work to international audiences without getting bogged down in the cultural boycott promoted by the ANC. That boycott was designed to deprive South African audiences of foreign entertainers, but at times foreign promoters concerned about political missteps were also reluctant to book South African groups.

The ANC cultural committee had ideological tests. At the ANC's London office in 1988, the exiled South African poet Wally Serote explained: "I don't believe that art is neutral." He demanded that artists from South Africa and those visiting South Africa consult the ANC first. Serote would then consult people "at home" about whether to give the ANC's approval. "If they say the work is not promoting our interests, we'll say no. If they say yes, we'll say OK." Serote added that not every work of art need be political. "It's true musicians sing about love and love makers, but they don't do that from a vacuum. I'm not saying you must sing about Mandela . . . I'm asking where you belong in national culture."

Many artists resented having to pass a test of an ANC committee, and they cringed at culture being labeled "progressive" or "reactionary." Athol Fugard, South Africa's leading playwright, told the London *Guardian*: "For thirty years I've had to live with the threat of being shut, of being silenced, of being closed down, of being

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censored. With the cultural boycott comes a demand that all art, to be labeled significant . . . must be a play, a poem, a painting, whatever, that directs itself to that little bit of human psyche that the political speech directs itself to. I don't buy that. There is a tragic and telling poem by Mayakovsky, the great Russian poet, in which he talks about how he subordinated his writing to the cause and wrote the poems that were needed by the revolution and by postrevolutionary Russian society as it started building itself up. And there are two lines which I remember, because I find them chilling and very frightening: 'I put my heel down on the throat of my own song and died of silence.' He committed suicide, I think four or five weeks after writing that." After apartheid artists will be even more reluctant to subject themselves to restrictions on freedom of expression, no matter how much pressure there will be to rally round the cause.

Perhaps the most important contribution Mandela and his long-time colleague Walter Sisulu can make to a future South Africa is a sense of restraint. In his speech to Congress, Mandela proclaimed his admiration for George Washington. Like Washington, South Africa's re-founding fathers could be remembered as much for what they don't do as what they do do. Washington did not become an imperial president. He did not mix his military duties with his civilian duties. He did not run for a third term. Few liberation leaders have this quality; it tends to be inconsistent with the uncompromising zeal and drive that made them good liberation leaders. Robert Mugabe's unwillingness to compromise made him a formidable foe to white rule in Rhodesia. It is a less valuable asset as prime minister of Zimbabwe. Because of an obscure matter of principle, he refused for ten years to sign an Overseas Private Investment Corp. code even though it would have made it easier for Zimbabwe to attract foreign capital. And despite bringing about reconciliation with whites while winning a commanding democratic majority in parliament, Mugabe has pressed opposition members to accept a one-party state.

Mandela and Sisulu appear to be different. In a meeting at *The Washington Post*, Mandela said: "In the new South Africa . . . parties will be free to form themselves, and the ANC has no right to say to any political party, to any group, that you can only exist if you join us, if you accept us as an embracing organization." That would appear to leave room for civil society.

Mandela's and Sisulu's uncompromising devotion to their cause is tempered by a desire for reconciliation and a sense of respect for others with differing views. Both have had amiable meetings with the leader of the PAC to prevent tensions despite their differing views on negotiations. Sisulu has met (albeit in vain) with Inkatha leaders to try to settle the deadly fighting in Natal, which has claimed thousands of lives over three years. When South African Jews were angered by Mandela's warm statements toward the Palestine Liberation Organization, he initiated a meeting with Jewish leaders. In Washington Mandela pledged that "each national group will have the right to establish its own schools if it wants to, to give instructions in its own language, to retain its own culture and its own religion"—words that will soothe Afrikaners who want to protect their ethnic identity.

Within the ANC, Mandela has insisted that the organization elect new leaders before substantive talks with the government. He has steadfastly insisted that he is no prophet handing down commandments from on high. He has nurtured a style of consultation and conciliation, meeting with union and community group leaders to canvass their views. In speaking to people outside the organization, Mandela has indicated that though he has his own views, the shape of things to come will be the product of negotiation.

Establishing limits of power is an important element in the transfer of power. Many white South Africans who suggest this simply want to frustrate the aspirations of blacks. But it would be wise for South Africa's new leaders to leave space for civil society. It is not simply a tool for change; it is the basis of change. As the Polish Solidarity theorist Adam Michnik wrote, "The essence [of the Solidarity movement] lay in the attempt to reconstruct society, to restore social bonds outside official institutions."

No constitutional mechanism can serve as an ironclad guarantee of pluralism, and the forty-two years of National Party rule haven't exactly set a laudatory precedent. Protection for the principles of restraint and pluralism can emerge only from practice, between racial and political camps as well as within them. Those principles have been best expressed by Albie Sachs, a formerly exiled white ANC lawyer and one-time member of the South African Communist Party who lost his arm to a car bomb planted by South African agents. Sachs set off a storm inside South Africa with a speech last February on the ANC's (updated) vision of a post-apartheid culture:

> The objective is not to create a model culture into which everyone has to assimilate, but to acknowledge and take pride in the cultural variety of our people. . . . We think we are the best . . . but this does not require us to force our views down the throats of others. We exercise true leadership by being non-hegemonic, by selflessly trying to create the widest unity of the oppressed and to encourage all forces for change, by showing the people that we are fighting not to impose a view upon them but to give them the right to choose the kind of society they want and the kind of government they want. We are not afraid of the ballot box, of open debate, of opposition. One fine day we will even have our Ian Smith equivalents protesting and grumbling about every change being made and looking back with nostalgia to the good old days of apartheid, but we will take them on at the hustings. In conditions of freedom, we have no doubt who will win, and if we should forfeit the trust of the people, then we deserve to lose.

Let's hope these words are written on a foundation stone for a free South Africa, and not on its tombstone. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Crisis

Preservation is now a prime word in the world's lexicon. Lately, belatedly, attention is being paid to the desolation of natural and man-made wonders: forests, rivers, cities. In our time the title of Thomas Otway's tragedy *Venice Preserved* (1682) takes on another meaning. I read recently that in the Library of Congress, the largest library in the world, books are crumbling into dust at a rate of more than 200 volumes a day and that preservation plans are now in hand.

A word, please, for films. Here is a blunt shocker from *Daily Variety* of April 17 last:

> Half of all films made in the U.S. before the 1950 introduction of acetate safety film have already been lost forever, and the remaining nitrate footage . . . is inexorably decaying and must be transferred to safety stock (at $1-2 per foot) as soon as possible.

For a notion of the expense: the film archive at the University of California, Los Angeles, alone has 25 million feet of nitrate film; all the U.S. archives are estimated to have a total of 100 million feet. And while we wait, while I write this and you read it, films are turning into dust, if they are not—as nitrate film can do—spontaneously combusting.

For those who may shrug at the loss of bygone Saturday-afternoon serials and soppy romances, a question. How many of the Library of Congress's 21 million volumes are first-class literature or scholarship? Who would like the job of deciding which volumes in that library should be allowed to disappear? Which is to say, who will volunteer to dispose of which portions of mankind's past?

For film, the subject is both the same and somewhat different. The differences are two. First, film as a medium is predominantly American—in the development of its technology and, even more distinctly, of its mythology. American responsibility for preservation ought therefore to lead. Second, there's a special bitterness in the fact that the film past is not remote; it almost all occurred in this century. Yet more than one film historian has said that it is easier to get materials for the study of ancient times than for the earliest days of film.

Robert Rosen, the director of the UCLA Film & Television Archives, says that some help has come to him from some studios but that "none does enough." UCLA has the second-largest holdings of feature films after the Library of Congress (where a copy of every film is deposited for copyright purposes), and UCLA opinion ought to be given special weight because out of that archive have come the restoration and reconstitution of a number of significant films. Orson Welles's *Macbeth* was changed from a quasi joke to a powerful and important film through the restoration by Robert Gitt of UCLA (TNR, July 26, 1980).

Some encouragements. Paramount Pictures is completing two air-conditioned storage facilities for its films, one in Pennsylvania and one on the studio lot, and has been striking new prints of hundreds of its titles. The Film Foundation, a group dedicated to American film preservation, has been formed by eight well-known filmmakers: Martin Scorsese, who is the president, Woody Allen, Francis Coppola, Stanley Kubrick, George Lucas, Sydney Pollack, and Robert Redford, together with an advisory council of archivists. Scorsese said (*Daily Variety*, May 2) that "a major impetus for the foundation . . . was the discovery that the original negative no longer exists for even a modern classic such as Kubrick's 1964 *Dr. Strangelove*."

The goal is to raise at least $30 million for film preservation. Already Universal has promised $1 million a year to the foundation for lab costs in restoring fifty of its own films, and messages of support have come from other studios. Said Steven Spielberg: "We'd be very happy to take some of these well-wishing, wonderful telegrams from studios and convert them into cash later."

In my view preservation is a much more urgent cause than the campaign against colorization. Colorization is a disgrace, but it doesn't destroy the originals. I hope that all those who were so outraged by the coloring of films for TV—but who had rarely said a word about the previous cutting, interruptions, or frame-size alterations for TV—will be at least as active in this campaign.

The situation is not notably better abroad. Fire has already devastated. In 1980 one of the warehouses of the French Cinémathèque was destroyed in a few minutes. In 1981 the entire collection in the Mexico City archive was quickly incinerated, and a year later the same disaster struck the Koblenz archive in West Germany.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Longtime Companion. *A group of New York gay friends lose some of their number as AIDS arrives in 1981 and ravages through 1989. Craig Lucas's screenplay is compassionate yet somehow bright. (Reviewed 5/28/90)* **Q&A.** *Excellent acting and a probing view of the seamier New York in this lumpily written (Sidney Lumet) but well-directed (Sidney Lumet) drama of drugs and corruption in high places (5/21/90)* **Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!** *Warmth isn't what one would expect from Pedro Almodóvar, but he supplies it in this wild romance of a porno star and her kidnapper. Madrid at its maddest. (5/14/90)* **Without *You* I'm Nothing.** *Disturbing, amusing, perceptive are only three of the terms that Sandra Bernhard and her director John Boskovich deserve for this film of her one-woman show. (7/2/90)* **—SK**

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Last year the Royal Film Archive of Belgium published a brochure called *Films in Distress* written by Lenny Borger, an American on the *Variety* staff in Paris. (I'm indebted to Borger for much of the information in this article.) He noted that in the 1980s consciousness had been raised considerably about the preservation crisis (he cited the efforts of the American Film Institute) but added that only "a few film producing and archiving nations such as Sweden and the Eastern bloc countries . . . can today boast of having nearly completed their nitrate to acetate transfer program."

Elsewhere Borger raises another important question—one that literary scholars would call textual integrity. Example: Renoir's *Rules of the Game*. Scenes were excised, by Renoir himself, after the stormy premiere in 1939. The original 105-minute negative was destroyed in an air raid on the Renault car factories near the Billancourt film studios in 1941; but after the war the original version was pieced together from various sources. A dupe negative of this restored version was lost in a lab fire in the 1970s. There remained a second dupe negative of the postwar restoration, which has been used for recent prints. But this second dupe is photographically inferior, markedly so. The Belgian archive has a fine print made from the good (now lost) first negative of the restored film, and unless all present prints are taken out of circulation and all future prints are derived from the Belgian print, filmgoers will forever see a version of a masterpiece that is twice removed photographically from the original.

This tortuous history is only one instance. Two years ago at the Jerusalem Film Festival I saw a beautiful, reconstituted print of Dreyer's much-lacerated *Passion of Joan of Arc* that had been prepared by the French Cinémathèque. It had cost the Cinémathèque years of research and considerable money to bring just one film to the state that all films ought to enjoy. No computer printout is needed about the money required to assure the integrity and sheer physical safety for the world's film heritage.

Nowadays every artistic, intellectual, and humane activity is in sore need of funds. The practical question, then, is: amid so many rightful demands on public and private money, how far down on the list should the preservation and restoration of films be placed? I hope that those who control purse strings will consider what films have meant to *them* and can mean to later generations. Are we willing to disinherit the future, to deprive it of what this century has achieved in the most important new art form of the century? •

Irony comes to power in Prague.

All the President's Plays

BY STANISLAW BARANCZAK

"SIX ONE-ACT PLAYS BY SIX WORLD LEADERS" was what a recent *New Yorker* cartoon envisaged as a canopy advertisement above the door to an off-Broadway theater. The wit is in the arithmetic. The number six suspends the joke precisely between the actual state of affairs and the realm of the improbable. Had the sign said, "TWO ONE-ACT PLAYS BY TWO WORLD LEADERS," we would not laugh, because the estimate would be too realistic. Had it said "TEN ONE-ACT PLAYS BY TEN WORLD LEADERS," we would not laugh, because the estimate would be too fantastic. But six, why not?

Largo Desolato: A Play in Seven Scenes
by Václav Havel
English version by Tom Stoppard
(Grove Press, 58 pp., $6.95)

Temptation: A Play in Ten Scenes
by Václav Havel
translated from the Czech by Marie Winn
(Grove Press, 102 pp., $9.95)

The Memorandum: A Play
Václav Havel
translated from the Czech by Vera Blackwell
introduction by Tom Stoppard
(Grove Weidenfeld, 88 pp., $7.95)

The Vaněk Plays: Four Authors, One Character
edited by Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz
(University of British Columbia Press, 258 pp., $34.95, $17.95 paper)

Disturbing the Peace: A Conversation with Karel Hvížďala
by Václav Havel
translated from the Czech
and with an introduction by Paul Wilson
(Knopf, 215 pp., $19.95)

Not long ago, there was just one world leader whose résumé included a few plays actually written by him and performed on stage (though their production anywhere near Broadway seems a rather remote possibility). Now there are two: the pope has been joined by the president of Czechoslovakia. Who's next? Hasn't a recent article published in a Solidarity newspaper proposed Leszek Kolakowski for the presidency of Poland? Kolakowski, let's not forget, is the author not just of works of philosophy, but also of a comedy he wrote in his spare time. The trend seems to be on the rise. You don't have to be royalty to collect royalties; being the president of a small nation will suffice.

Our amusement at the sight of a playwright becoming his country's president speaks volumes about the declining standards in the West's political life. What's so strange about the election of an outstanding writer from Bohemia? Is it any more consistent with the natural order of things if a much less outstanding golf player from Indiana gets elected to do the same? Weren't Lincoln and Churchill gifted writers? Wouldn't we all be slightly better off if our leaders knew how to select a proper word, put together a precise sentence, plant a stirring idea in a well-constructed paragraph?

Admittedly, even though there might be some truth in the tired Shelley line (you know, the one about poets being the unacknowledged legislators of the world), things get a little complicated when a poet, or a playwright, becomes acknowledged as a legislator, a minister, or a president. First of all, the sort of parliament or government he serves is not entirely inconsequential. The sad case of the talented poet Ernesto Cardenál, who lent support to Daniel Ortega's regime by accepting the position of its minister of culture, is just one example of the incompatibility between literature's natural thirst for freedom and despotism's natural desire to suppress freedom. That is a conflict in which something has to give, and all too often it has been the writer's conscience that has given.

Moreover, history provides us with a hair-raising number of examples of humanity's worst enemies, from Nero to Hitler, Goebbels, Stalin, and Mao, who considered themselves, at least before their ascent to power but sometimes also a long time after it, artists or writers. A failed artist or a graphomaniac seems to be particularly good material for the

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making of a ruthless oppressor; he need only apply his crude aesthetic principle of mechanical symmetry to the unruly and formless human mass.

And even if the political system is a democratic one, and the "acknowledged legislator" or leader happens to be an artist or a writer wise enough to be profoundly aware of human diversity, his success in the world of politics is far from assured. As a writer, his chief strength—the force that made him a "legislator," however "unacknowledged," in the first place—was his steadfast rejection of compromise. As a politician, however, he soon finds out that politics in a democratic society is nothing but the art of compromise.

If it so happened one day that destiny wanted the first president of post-Communist Czechoslovakia to be a writer, what kind of writer should he ideally be? Let us imagine a group of Czechoslovak citizens gathered secretly in a private apartment in the middle of 1989, taking refuge from their depressing reality by discussing this preposterous question, a question as thoroughly outlandish to them as the seashore that Shakespeare gave Bohemia in *A Winter's Tale*. Any answer would certainly have included the reverse of the qualities we have just mentioned.

First, the literary president should be a writer with an extraordinarily strong moral backbone, someone whose life, like his work, has been dedicated to searching for the untraversable borderline between good and evil; someone, therefore, who would be able to bring the spirit of ethics into his country's national and international politics. Second, the literary president should be a good writer, endowed with the sense of measure and balance that in the sphere of aesthetics is called good taste or artistic skill, and in the sphere of politics translates into a pluralistic tolerance for the natural diversity of people and their opinions. A playwright—someone who shows the world through dialogue—would be a particularly well-qualified candidate: the spectacle of conflicting human perspectives forms the lifeblood of his art.

And third, the literary president should be a writer blessed with a tremendous sense of humor, preferably of the self-mocking, ironic, absurdist sort. For it is only with such a sense of humor that a writer-turned-president would be able to think seriously of making his nation ascend from the depths of the totalitarian absurd toward a more or less rational social organization, while at the same time never taking himself and the miracle of his own ascension too seriously.

In short, the ideal president of Czechoslovakia that our depressed friends would have likely dreamed up is this: a genuinely good playwright with a genuinely strong set of moral convictions balanced by a genuine sense of pluralistic tolerance and a genuine sense of humor.

In the middle of 1989, there happened to be one living and breathing candidate who matched this impossibly exacting description. His name was Václav Havel.

"The real test of a man is not how well he plays the role he has invented for himself, but how well he plays the role that destiny assigned to him." This is how Havel himself, quoting the dictum of his friend and mentor, the late philosopher Jan Patočka, reflects on all the twists of fate that made him first Czechoslovakia's most vilified dissident and then its most venerated president. The issue of the "role" (a fitting term in the mouth of a playwright) is crucial in Havel's philosophical system. What he means by that is the responsibility that man, "thrown into the world," accepts by relating his life to the Absolute Horizon of transcendence (which is defined by Havel, who is reluctant to resort to the vocabulary of theology, as the "Memory of Being").

This kind of outlook, in Havel's case, owes as much to the inspiration drawn from the works of existentialists and phenomenologists as to the inspiration provided by life. *Letters to Olga*, Havel's most detailed and extensive exposition of his philosophy of existence, was written, symbolically enough, in a prison cell—a place to which his "role" consistently led him. It was a place that he converted, ironically, into a stage on which to play, even more eloquently, the same role he had played outside the prison walls. *Letters to Olga* focused on the final outcome of a life, on its complete philosophy. The life that produced this outcome has now, in turn, become the focus of *Disturbing the Peace*, a highly engaging autobiographical sketch in the form of a book-length interview. This much-needed book explains how the events of the unbelievable fall of 1989 can be seen as an almost inevitable phase in Havel's lifelong "role," which was both "assigned to him" by destiny and "invented" by himself.

The facts of Havel's life were more or less known in the West even before 1989, mostly thanks to the publicity generated by his trials and his prison sentences. Havel's life was marked by absurd paradoxes early. Born in 1936 into the wealthy family of a civil engineer, he was suddenly a social pariah—the child of a class enemy—in 1948, when Czechoslovakia turned Communist. He was denied access to a higher education, worked for a while as a laboratory technician, and went through a two-year military service. Throughout that ordeal, he wrote (his first article was published in 1955), and made his presence known in public appearances, such as his speech at an official symposium of young writers in 1956, shockingly critical of the official hierarchy of literary values.

From 1959 on, his life was inextricably linked to theater. He joined Prague's unorthodox Theater on the Balustrade, initially as a stage hand, and ended up as its literary adviser. *Garden Party*, his first play, premiered in 1963. In 1965 he joined the editorial staff of the monthly *Tvář*, a tribune of rebellious young writers.

Those were heady times of growing ferment and hope, but change was yet to come. *Tvář* was soon closed down by its own editors, unable to continue publishing under the watchful eye of the Party. Between 1956 and 1968, Havel used consecutive congresses of the Czechoslovak Writers' Association as forums for his increasingly critical speeches, but his ideas were staunchly resisted by the well-entrenched camp of Communist writers. In March 1968 he helped establish the Circle of Independent Writers, thus creating a cultural alternative of major importance. Meanwhile his next plays had their Czech and Western premieres, and his name became internationally known.

Havel became even better known after the Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion, when he emerged as one of the most eloquent champions of human rights in Husák's police state. His participation in actions of protest and his own analyses of the social apathy induced by Brezhnev's Czechoslovak puppets (such as his famous "Letter to Dr. Gustáv Husák," which was written in 1975) brought down on him increasingly vicious personal attacks in the official media as well as unrelenting police harassment. On January 1, 1977, Havel joined Patočka and Jiří Hajek as a spokesman for the Charter 77 movement. The rest is a story of interrogations, investigations, detentions, provocations, searches, house arrests, buggings, prosecutor's charges, trials, jail sentences, labor camps, prison hospitals, and, amid all this turmoil, more writing.

As we all know, this particular story has a happy ending, the impeccable symmetry of which—the nation's most persecuted writer turns overnight into the nation's president—looks downright suspicious. Were Havel's life a novel, it might be the most naive piece of literary kitsch in the twentieth century. A clear-

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headed observer of the world's ways knows that there is no such neat example of virtue miraculously rewarded in real life. Is Havel's life a fairy tale, a dream? The honest and the brave, after all, are supposed to get beaten to death by unknown assailants, to disappear without trace, to be found in the trunk of an abandoned car with bullets in their heads. Havel's triumph is so unequivocally well deserved that it looks utterly outlandish.

And no wonder: this particular writer, again, is a walking paradox. This is true not merely of the course of his life, but also of his inner nature. Havel's role seems to have been delineated from the very beginning of his public and literary activity by his mind's preoccupation with two seemingly incompatible inclinations. His works and his actions reflect, on the one hand, a strong sense of moral order and of the need for justice, and on the other, a good-natured tolerance mixed with an absurd, zany sense of humor. An episode mentioned in *Disturbing the Peace* nicely illustrates the constant coexistence of these two inclinations. At one point early in Husák's rule, Havel took part in a general assembly of the governing boards of the unions of writers and artists, which feared—not without foundation, it soon turned out—that their forcible dissolution was imminent. Havel was included in a three-member committee charged with drafting a strong statement to protest, and to try to deflect, the blow:

> Unfortunately, I was also expected to participate in the opening of a show of paintings by a friend of mine in the Spálená Gallery, on Spálená Street, not far away. I wasn't going to give a serious speech—there were art historians for that—just take part in a little program of verses and songs. This was the dadaist wish of my friend, who loved the way I sang patriotic songs out of tune and gave impassioned recitations from our national literary classics at parties. And so, pretending that I had to go to the bathroom, I fled from the task of writing the historic manifesto and I ran to the gallery opening, where I sang and recited to a shocked audience, then rushed back to the film club to write the final paragraph.

Havel proceeds to note "something symbolic in this accidental juxtaposition." It illustrates, he suggests, certain fusions of a more general scope: the way the Czechs' sense—and more generally, the Central Europeans' sense—of misery about their existence is wed to a "sense of irony and self-deprecation." "Don't these two things somehow belong essentially together?" asks Havel. "Don't they condition each other?" The Central European writer's taste for the absurd, for dark humor, produces in him the saving art of "maintaining constant distance" from the world while never completely disengaging from it. Paradoxically, it is exactly the art of distance that allows you to see your subject from up close. As Havel puts it, "The outlines of genuine meaning can only be perceived from the bottom of absurdity."

In truth, the episode says more about Havel himself than about Central European culture. The distinguishing feature of his life and his art seems to be the nearly perfect balance between the seriousness of his moral imperatives and the boundlessness of his self-irony. That irony is not just his mind's innate inclination. It also stems from his recognition that his own vision of the truth—no matter how scrupulously precise he tries to make it, no matter how much he is himself sure of its accuracy—is still only one of many individual human truths.

It is by now quite obvious how much this balance of moral strength without fanaticism and pluralistic tolerance without relativism has affected Havel's progress along his political path. It is perhaps less clear how this same balance is reflected in his art. There, just as in Havel's politics, the equilibrium of opposites keeps the forces in check, so that the extreme manifestations of each can cancel the other out.

An artist of Havel's sort is truly himself when he submits to his moral impulses, when his work originates from his fundamental objection to the world's injustice. But if that were all it took, the art might easily lapse into dogmatic and self-righteous didacticism, the work would be noble yet tedious moral instruction. Another condition, clearly, must be met. In the arts, the moralist needs to have a sense of humor.

That is not as easy as it sounds. A sense of humor is shorthand for many abilities, from the power to understand others' positions and motivations to the willingness to take oneself with a grain of salt. Only this kind of humor can save the artist from the chronic stiffness of his moral backbone, a disease that is quite common among artists in oppressed societies. It is a disease with which you can live, but not, for instance, dance: you can hold yourself impressively erect, but be too rigid for unrestrained expression. Of course, if the backbone suffers from permanent softening (an even more common affliction), if all that remains is the relativism and the absurdist sense of humor, the effects are even more frightening: when left to himself and to his choreographies, the artist may display much flexibility, but also yield easily to the slightest pressure.

That is why Havel the playwright cannot really be squeezed into either of the two familiar drawers, "Theater of the Absurd" or "Protest Theater." He is too embedded in a stable bedrock of moral principles to fit into the first, and he is too irreverent and self-ironic to fit into the second. More precisely, his plays fall into two different categories, one stemming from the tradition of political theater, the other suggesting some superficial affinities with the Theater of the Absurd. The first category is represented by more or less realistic works such as the series of three one-act "Vaněk plays," inaugurated in 1975 by the famed *Audience*. *Largo Desolato*, one of Havel's relatively recent creations, also belongs here. In plays of this sort, realism takes a deep whiff of grotesque exaggeration, but there is no doubt, particularly in the Vaněk trilogy, that the action takes place in Husák's Czechoslovakia and that the characters' behavior is motivated by circumstances of that time and that place. (Unfortunately, the English version of *Largo Desolato*, otherwise excellently done by Tom Stoppard, obliterates this Czechoslovakian specificity by Anglicizing the names.)

The other category, which includes *The Memorandum* and *Temptation*, is represented by plays, usually of greater length and based on more developed plots, that are parabolic rather than realistic. Sometimes they border on anti-utopian fantasy. Instead of a realistic setting, the typical drama revolves around a fictitious institution such as the Orwellian office in *The Memorandum*, complete with watchmen hidden in the hollow walls to keep an eye on employees through special cracks, and the scientific institute at war with society's "irrational tendencies" in *Temptation*. What goes beyond realism, actually, is not so much the setting as the plot's starting device: the introduction of Ptydepe, the artificial language for interoffice communication, in *The Memorandum* and the bureaucratic forms of idolatry of "rational science" that produce the Faustian rebellion of the protagonist in *Temptation*.

The difference between Havel's two types of plays, however, is one of degree. Both deal with essentially the same issues; the parabolic differs from the realistic perhaps only in that the grotesque and the absurd are turned up a notch. But the grotesque and the absurd are intrinsically present even in the most "realistic" of Havel's plays. In the strictly realistic *Audience*, a play that utilizes Havel's own firsthand experience of work at the Trutnov brewery, a socialist workplace that re-educates its employees by making them submit regular reports

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on themselves to the secret police cannot help but seem like a profoundly aberrant institution. And it is no less so than the imaginary office in *The Memorandum* that forces its employees to learn a special language, one that would help them produce more precise memos if its utter precision did not make it impossible to use. The only difference is that *Audience* could really have happened in Husák's Czechoslovakia, while something not so blatantly idiotic as *The Messenger*, but something similar in spirit, could perhaps have happened there.

Another striking similarity between Havel's "realistic" and "parabolic" plays lies in their protagonists. In fact, it would only be a slight oversimplification to say that whatever sort of play Havel writes, a single protagonist by the name of Ferdinand Vaněk always pops up at the center of its plot. The now legendary figure of Vaněk appeared first in *Audience* (to my mind, still the most perfectly executed accomplishment of Havel's wit), to reappear in his next two one-act plays, *Unveiling* and *Protest*. At the same time, the underground success of *Audience* gave rise to a one-of-a-kind literary phenomenon: a constellation of plays employing the same protagonist but written by different authors. ("The Vaněk plays" in that broader sense include pieces written by Pavel Kohout, Pavel Landovský, and Jiří Dienstbier, and they are all reprinted in UBC Press's handy collection.) But Leopold Nettles of *Largo Desolato* is also, to a large extent, another incarnation of Vaněk, and Vaněk-like characters spur the dramatic action in Havel's "parabolic" plays as well.

What these characters share is a position in society. All of them can be roughly defined as dissidents in a totalitarian state, or at least (as in the cases of Josef Gross in *The Memorandum* and Dr. Foustka in *Temptation*) jammed cogwheels in the otherwise smoothly functioning machine of a powerful institution. This position entails a number of consequences. The most crucial is that the Vaněk-like character represents, obviously, a political and moral minority. He is one of the last Mohicans of common sense, truthfulness, and human decency in a society that has laboriously adopted, in lieu of those simple principles, a Darwinian methodology of survival. Blind obedience to authority, thoughtless concentration on necessities of everyday life, and deep-seated distrust of any protester or reformer are the chief precepts of this methodology. Thus Vaněk is by no means a valiant knight in shining armor or a modern Robin Hood whom the wretched of the earth look up to. Despite all the words of cautious support and solidarity that some of his acquaintances occasionally dare whisper into his ear, Vaněk is hated and despised. Hated, because he is "disturbing the peace" of pacified minds; despised, because he is—cannot help being—a loser. The forces that he opposes are too powerful; he will certainly be crushed in the foreseeable future.

Hence the central paradox of Havel's literary universe: it is not Vaněk who, from the heights of his moral purity as a fighter for human rights, accuses the corrupt society of indifference; it is his society that accuses Vaněk of the same—yes, of indifference. In the eyes of a citizen whose main concerns are promotion at his workplace, getting his daughter into a university, and building himself a dacha in the country, Vaněk looks like a dangerous instigator and rabblerouser. What the Brewmaster in *Audience* says to his face would be echoed with equal sincerity by other characters in other plays, had their tongues been similarly loosened by the heavy intake of beer: "Principles! Principles! Damn right you gonna fight for your damn principles ... —but what about me? I only get my ass busted for having principles!" Vaněk's original sin, all of them seem to think, is his indifference to other people, an attitude that he demonstrates merely by living among them and irritating them with his inflated conscience. He can afford to stick his neck out; we can't.

In specific plays, this reverberating "He can, we can't" is wrapped in different words, depending on the accuser's social status, intellectual acumen, and degree of cowardice. The Brewmaster's argument runs along the lines of social division: you can, but I can't, because I'm a simple worker whom nobody will care to defend and whose protest will go unheard anyway. In *Unveiling*, a married couple of friends who invited Vaněk for the "unveiling" of their newly decorated apartment resort to an argument that reflects their philosophy of life: you can, but we can't, because we need to live our lives to the full, while the pleasures of life apparently do not matter much to you. In *Protest*, a well-to-do screenwriter wriggles out of a moral obligation to sign a petition in defense of an imprisoned artist by invoking sophisticated arguments related to political tactics (he ends up endorsing "the more beneficial effect which the protest would have *without* my signature"), which essentially come down to the following: you can, but I can't, because your career has gone to the dogs anyway, while mine is still something I have to take care of.

These are all voices of human normalcy. Havel the pluralist has no choice but to register them, and even partly to agree with them. But Havel the moralist counters with a more powerful argument of his own: that in a totalitarian society it is precisely the "abnormal" troublemakers who have preserved the last vestiges of normalcy. Theirs is the ordinary human striving for freedom and dignity, the kind that ultimately matters more than the misleading normalcy of a full stomach. And Havel the self-ironist acknowledges, and brings into dramatic relief, the intrinsic irony of the dissidents' position: they may well be the only normal human beings around, but since they constitute a ridiculously powerless minority, their cause, noble though it is, will always be doomed to defeat.

In Havel's plays, Vaněk serves as the central point around which these three lines of argument interlock, forming a triangular trap with no way out. He has no choice but to admit that people have basic rights to food on their tables and to a TV show after dinner. He realizes that his actions make people uneasy or put them at a risk. At the same time, he has no choice; he must stick to his own basic right to follow the voice of his conscience. That is not because of moral haughtiness, but for the simple reason that he is unable to force himself to do things or utter words that he considers wrong or false. In a sense, he lives among his compatriots like a foreigner in Paris: he is aware that all the French eat escargots, and he is even able to grasp abstractly their reasons for doing so, but he is physically incapable of forcing the slimy invertebrates down his throat. Finally Vaněk has no choice but to realize his own comical awkwardness. In a society like his, he will always be the odd man out, a laughable exception to the prevailing rule.

The combination of these three necessities makes Vaněk a highly complex dramatic character. This is clear even in the Vaněk trilogy, in which Havel's protagonist is, in terms of sheer stage presence, the least exposed among all the characters. He might seem like little more than a taciturn straight man opposite his rambling and dramatically more developed counterparts. Yet his psychological profile would fill volumes. He is, oddly yet convincingly, heroic and anti-heroic, a centerpiece of tragedy as well as farce. He is never so blindly self-righteous as to forget that, after all, he shares with people their trivial needs, that therefore he is one of them. If his moral backbone is a little more erect than most people's, it is also a backbone that aches.

Vaněk, in sum, is not comfortable with

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his nagging conscience, and he is not terribly proud of it, either. He realizes how little separates him from the less heroic human mass. In *Audience*, Vaněk, apparently blacklisted, barred from any white-collar job, and forced to take up physical labor in a provincial brewery, does not wish at all to be a martyr; and it is this reluctance that motivates the entire plot. He would gladly swallow the bait of the less exhausting clerical position that the Brewmaster dangles in front of him, even at the cost of the fellow worker whom he would replace. The only reason that he rejects the offer is that the torture of toiling in the brewery's cold cellar is ultimately more bearable than the torture of the nonsensical informing on himself, which the Brewmaster requires as part of the deal.

In *Largo Desolato*, Havel's tendency to endow his dissident hero with anti-heroic features reaches an even greater extreme. Leopold Nettles is a dissident *malgré lui*, one who is not only aware of his weaknesses, like Vaněk, but also doubtful about whether he is up to the task at all. He did not really become a dissident; he was made one. Some of his philosophical writings were denounced by the regime as ideologically harmful, and his quiet life of an introspective bookworm was irrevocably changed. We see him at the point of total exhaustion, on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

Ironically, his new status as a dissident has deprived him of his previous independence. Now everyone, his supporters and persecutors alike, expects something from him. His apartment is visited by an unending stream of friends who worry about his doing nothing, friends who worry about his not doing enough, friends who worry about his doing too much, friends who worry about his worrying. While expecting a secret police search and arrest any minute, he has to entertain his far-from-satisfied lover and at the same time handle a visit from a pair of suspiciously enthusiastic working-class supporters who bear the unmistakable signs of *agents provocateurs*.

When the police finally turn up, their only demand is that Nettles renounce the authorship of his paper. When he refuses, the final blow falls: the police declare that his case has been adjourned "indefinitely for the time being," since it has become clear that his denial of his own identity "would be superfluous." Nettles cries, "Are you trying to say that I am no longer me?" The words aptly sum up what has happened to him. His self has been transformed into (to use the word Havel has applied elsewhere to his own life) a role. A role, in this case, defi-

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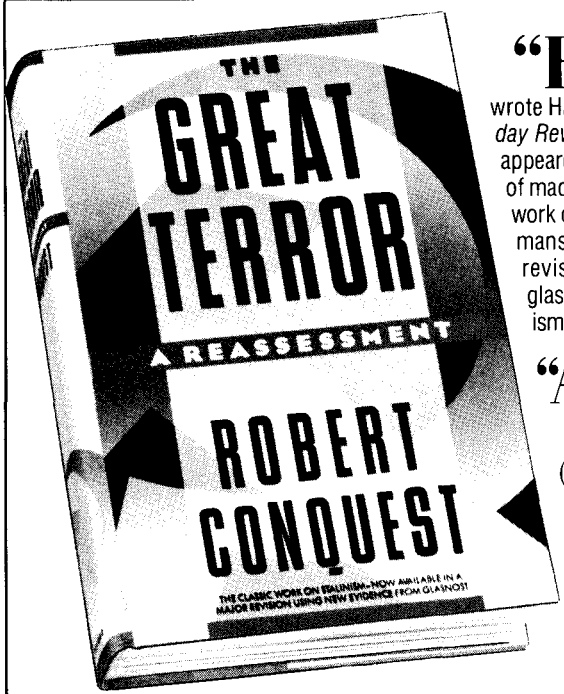

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nitely "assigned to him by destiny" rather than "invented by himself," but a role that he has been unable to "play well."

To what extent does Nettles personify the playwright's own doubts? Just as Havel the president is not a man of marble, Havel the dissident was not a man of iron. He has had his crises, his failures, his moments of despair. *Largo Desolato* was written in four days in July 1984, precisely at the low point of a bout of acute "postprison despair." Yet in *Disturbing the Peace* Havel plays down the autobiographical import of his play: "It is not about me, or only about me as such. The play has ambitions to be a human parable, and in that sense it's about man in general."

For Havel, though, writing "about man in general" never means distilling some abstract concept of humanity out of concrete and individual experience. On the contrary, it means portraying man in his concrete surroundings, in the web of his innumerable entanglements, from the metaphysical to the trivial. (*Temptation*, with its Mephistopheles suffering from smelly feet, and its Faust immersed in the vulgarity of power games and sycophancy of his colleagues, is a particularly apt illustration of that range of vision.) Central among those entanglements is the individual's relationship to society and its institutions. In Havel, who is a matchless literary expert on the ironies of totalitarianism, this relationship takes on, as a rule, the shape of the most ironic of oppressions: the constant oppression of the individual by the institutions that he helped create.

Seen from this point of view, Havel's entire dramatic output may not seem to have progressed much beyond, say, Ionesco's *The Rhinoceros* or *The Bald Singer*. The similarities extend even to characteristic techniques in construing dialogue and dramatic situations. Not unlike Ionesco, Havel's favorite device is mechanical repetition. His plays are organized masterfully, almost like musical pieces, around recurring, intercrossing, and clashing refrains, usually utterances from a small-talk phrase book; the more frequently repeated, the more meaningless they are. The Brewmaster's "Them's the paradoxes of life, right?" and similar verbal refrains find their counterparts in repetitive elements of stage action (for example, the way certain characters conspicuously hold hands in *Temptation*). The despotic oppression of language, custom, stereotype, institution, any automatism with which man replaces the irregularity, spontaneity, and uniqueness of his self is a theme that runs through the Theater of the Absurd. Havel did not invent it, he merely transplanted the theme and its corresponding dramatic techniques onto the ground of the specific experience of the inhabitant of a Central European police state.

What he did invent was his counterbalance to the oppressive weight of that experience. That counterbalance is the weak, confused, laughable, and oddly heroic Vaněk, in all his incarnations. Havel the moralist, Havel the pluralist, and Havel the ironist joined forces to produce a deeply human and exquisitely equivocal character. Precisely because Vaněk is safe from the excesses of relativistic immoralism, he is able to help us put things in perspective. Precisely because he is safe from the excesses of dogmatic didacticism and self-righteous seriousness, he remains someone who teaches us something, who has to be taken seriously.

If he is an anti-heroic and comical version of Camus's Rebel, he is nonetheless a Rebel with a cause—and a Rebel with no streak of single-minded obsessiveness. A Rebel essentially powerless, true; but Vaněk's obstinate defense of the core of his humanity expresses something more essential than the need for power: the need for values. In Central Europe in the mid-1970s, it was enough to realize the genuine presence of this need in the human world to begin to believe that "the power of the powerless," prophesied rather than described by Havel in his epoch-making essay of 1978, may one day manifest itself in real life. Last year it did. People very much like Havel's protagonist have woken up the rest of their society and won their seemingly lost cause. The symbolic credit for today's Czechoslovakia is owed not to Švejk, the bumbling soldier and relativistic philosopher of compromise. It is owed to Vaněk. •

The Inconsolable

BY HELEN VENDLER

Randall Jarrell: A Literary Life
by William H. Pritchard
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 338 pp., $25)

Selected Poems
by Randall Jarrell
edited by William H. Pritchard
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 115 pp., $17.95)

Randall Jarrell (1914-65) was a poet, a critic, a novelist, a teacher, the husband of two wives, and the devoted friend of many other writers in his cohort—older ones, like John Crowe Ransom and Robert Penn Warren and Allen Tate, and ones his own age, like Robert Lowell, John Berryman, and Peter Taylor. William Pritchard, a professor at Amherst who has made rather a specialty of writing brief, insightful, and sympathetic literary-critical lives of modern American poets, has now produced one of Jarrell, and has at the same time made a selection of Jarrell's best work to accompany the life. These two books will introduce Jarrell to a generation who never knew the wicked joy of reading his reviews or the warmth and solace of reading his generous and wistful poems.

Berryman, who shared Jarrell's nameless yearning, wrote about him in *The Dream Songs* after he died:

> In the chambers of the end we'll meet again
> I will say Randall, he'll say Pussycat
> and all will be as before
> whenas we sought, among the beloved faces,
> eminence and were dissatisfied with that
> and needed more.

Jarrell appears to have killed himself, or to have walked into the path of a car. (The decencies of inconclusiveness are still maintained about what actually happened; the official verdict was accidental death.) He had made a previous suicide attempt five months before, after a manic episode apparently caused by too much unmonitored Elavil, prescribed to counter a depression he fell into at fifty. Lowell commemorated Jarrell's death in one of the *Notebook* sonnets, remember-

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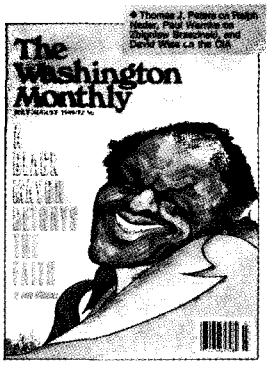

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ing first their time together at Kenyon, where Jarrell was teaching when Lowell was an undergraduate, and

then the night of the caged squirrel on its wheel:
lights, eyes, peering at you from the overpass;
black-gloved, black-coated, you plod out stubbornly,
as if asleep, Child Randall, as if in chainstep,
meeting the cars, and approving; a harsh luminosity,
as you clasp the blank coin at the foot of the tunnel.

Rather than speaking of a final depression, it would be truer to say that in his late forties Jarrell began to have less and less success in distracting himself from a lifelong depression. This constitutive melancholy is sometimes attributed to the wrenching loss that he felt when his parents divorced and, in Nashville with his mother, he lost for good the California life of his childhood, where he had been especially attached to his paternal grandparents.

He seems to have ascribed his sadness to that break in the famous late poem "The Lost World," in which we observe him on a year-long visit, after the divorce, to his grandparents and his great-grandmother. His mother is not in the poem (she is with his brother and her rich family in Nashville). His father is not in the poem, either; he was around, but living elsewhere. The young Jarrell is alone with benevolent adults who are not his parents. Then—and for the only time—he is happy. This suggests to me that what depressed the depressed child was life with his unhappy parents before their divorce. When his grandparents sent him back to his mother, against his pleas to stay with them forever, he never wrote to them again. He went back to being permanently depressed:

. . . In the darkness
The leaves fell one by one, like checks,
Into the grave;
And I thought: I am my own grave . . .
Then I woke . . .
"It's all a dream,"
I said to myself. "I am a grave dreaming
That it is a living man."

Jarrell strove against that inner grave all his life. One could read the life (though Pritchard does not) as a desperate one, heroic in its struggle against emptiness, as though a drowning man were to come up for air a hundred times rather than thrice. But when he sank for the hundred-and-first time, after the chemical stimulants had driven him into a shaming manic episode, none of the old life-stimulants—poems, students, friends, wives, pets—worked any longer, and he had no strength left to struggle further.

The chronically depressed child is a phenomenon only rather recently recognized. Such a child can turn into an Inconsolable. (Jarrell used to give abstractions a fairy-tale life by capitalizing them.) The Inconsolable attracts many friends because he seems to want so intensely to be consoled. He responds to friendship gratefully and vividly—and if he is clever, winning, intuitive, interested, and talkative like Jarrell, he and his friends forget his inconsolableness for a while. Then the void returns, yawning below. But into the abyss, as a sop to Cerberus, there is hastily stuffed another poem, another lecture, another trip, even a racing car—all staving off the next feeling of desolate vacancy.

Because this is the depression of a child, it has to be cured on a childlike level. Jarrell wanted a wife to be Gretel to his Hansel. His second wife, Mary Jarrell, says in her memoir of her husband:

> To be married to Randall was to be encapsulated with him. He wanted, and we had, a round-the-clock inseparability. We took three meals a day together, every day. I went along to his classes and he went along on my errands. I watched him play tennis, he picked out my clothes. Sometimes we were brother and sister "like Wordsworth and Dorothy" and other times we were twins, Randall pretended. "The Bobbsey Twins at the Plaza," he'd say up in our room at the Plaza.

Before their marriage, he had written to her, "I love you so much, sister"; and "Dearest, my own sister, I want so much to be married to thee, to never leave even for a day." A wife, by her constant presence, kept at bay the depression that settled over Jarrell whenever he was alone in the house.

Pritchard brings up Jarrell's childlessness and suggests a "disinclination to have children," but he does not ascribe that disinclination to the wish to be the child of the house rather than "the man of the house." He also remarks (as all commentators on Jarrell have done) on the poet's very frequent lyric use of a female speaker. There are many reasons, of course, why a poet might arrange to have some poems spoken by a person of (as we quaintly say) the "opposite" sex, and often it serves to extend the range of the voice beyond the merely personal. But Jarrell's voice as a woman is his own voice, only more so.

I can't think of another male poet who is most himself in a female role. Jarrell wrote, in 1942, an epitaph for himself in the poem "To Be Dead":

"Woman," men say of him, and women,
"Man."
The corpse says nothing, he is stripped
away,
Lies like a disused word.

One of Jarrell's triumphs in his role as woman occurs in a poem of 1963, "Next Day," where a woman whose husband is away at work, and whose children are away at school, muses on her suddenly empty life:

I'm afraid, as I was at the funeral
I went to yesterday.
My friend's cold made-up face, granite among its flowers,
Her undressed, operated-on, dressed body
Were my face and body.
As I think of her I hear her telling me

How young I seem; I *am* exceptional;
I think of all I have.
But really no one is exceptional,
No one has anything, I'm anybody,
I stand beside my grave
Confused with my life, that is commonplace and solitary.

In another poem, "The Lost Children," written in 1965 (the year Jarrell died), a mother realizes that her adult married daughter, busy with her own life, is as surely lost to her as her other daughter, who died. She "borrows" a child from next door as a surrogate, a new stimulant, but the pretense cannot keep her afloat:

I am tired
As a mother who's played all day, some rainy day.
I don't want to play it any more, I don't want to,
But the child keeps on playing, so I play.

Jarrell's plangency here, his tone of exhausted pity and sadness, is one that he must have thought unsuitable for voicing by a male speaker. Pritchard remarks as well on an asexuality and sexual prudishness in Jarrell—as though an arrestedness in childhood kept Jarrell a brilliant boy, not quite a man. It was no accident that in one of his marriage poems he refers to

Men
Who, lying each midnight with the sinister
Beings, their dark companions, women,
Suck childhood, beasthood, from a mother's breasts.

I still remember Jarrell's vivid face and bearing. I saw him only once, in 1950, when as a high school student I hied myself to Harvard for a summer conference called "The Defense of Poetry." I know, from Pritchard, that the talk I heard Jarrell give in Sanders Theater was on "The Obscurity of the Poet," but I don't remember the talk itself, except that it moved me enough to make me buy *Poetry and the Age*, Jarrell's wonderful book of criticism, when it appeared three years later.

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What I do recall is Jarrell's upward-lifted, rapt, eager, "forward-pointing" face, with its alive and mocking eyes. I did not see then what I see now in his criticism—a hectic vivacity, which is the other side of what Lowell, in his most Jarrell-like sonnet, "Night-Sweat," called " the downward glide/ and bias of existing":

> One life, one writing! But the downward glide
> and bias of existing wrings us dry—
> always inside me is the child who died,
> always inside me is his will to die.

Jarrell, the child for whom books were a total existence, an alternative to his "real life," was outraged by the very being of those who cared for books not at all, or who confused a documentation of life with true art. The most ruthless sentence that he ever wrote was reserved for the bad books of poetry sent for review to *The Nation* (where, for a year, he was the most exciting reviewer that poetry has ever had). He wrote:

> In the bad type of the thin pamphlets, in hand-set lines on imported paper, people's hard lives and hopeless ambitions have expressed themselves more directly and heartbreakingly than they have ever been expressed in any work of art: it is as if the writers had sent you their ripped-out arms and legs, with "This is a poem" scrawled on them in lipstick.

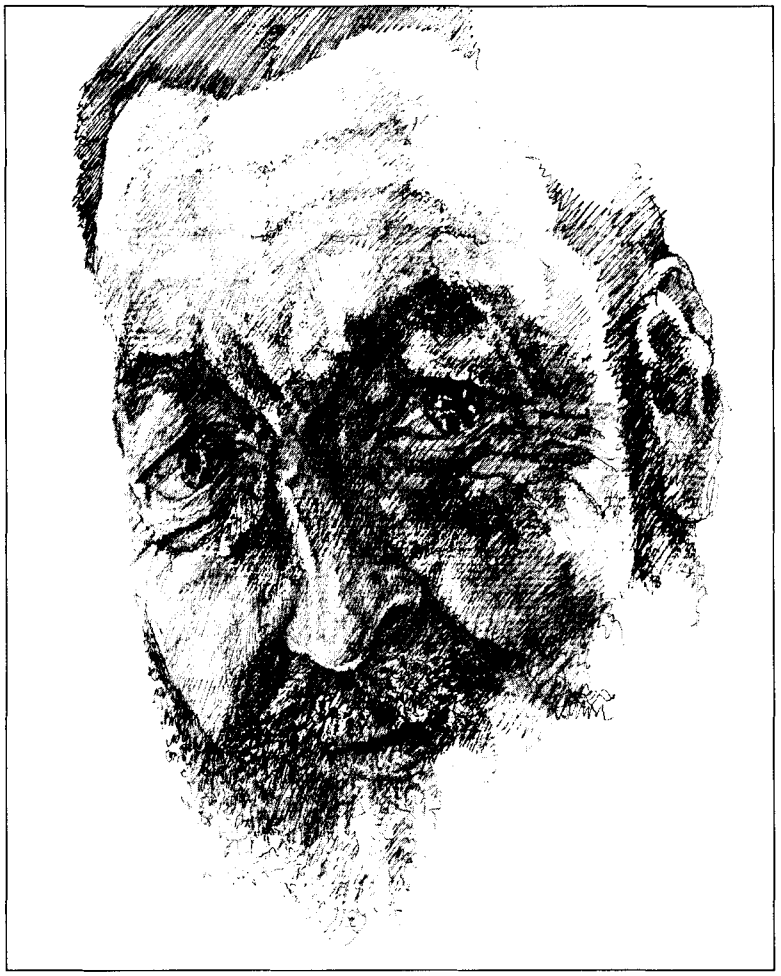
And he added, characteristically, another metaphor: that poetry is "a game of Pin the Tail on the Donkey in which there is for most of the players no tail, no donkey, not even a booby prize."

Jarrell probably saw clearly enough the scope of his own modest poetic talent. He did not, as Pritchard points out, have any faith in personal progress or change; he seemed to think that what happened to anyone, himself included, was inevitable. He always wished to change—and that wish gives his poetry its characteristic note of unsatisfied yearning—but he also always despaired of change, and that despair gives his poetry its typically static quality. The reversibility of his vivacity and his depression was evident to him as early as 1950, in "Orient Express":

> One thinks, "Behind everything
> An unforced joy, an unwilling
> Sadness (a willing sadness, a forced joy)
> Moves changelessly" . . .
> Behind everything there is always
> The unknown unwanted life.

That "unwanted life," rather sparsely chronicled in Pritchard's biography, was in large part what Lowell called, in his elegy for Berryman, "the generic life" of their generation:

> Yet really we had the same life,
> the generic one
> our generation offered . . .
> first students, then with our own,
> our galaxy of grands maîtres . . .



RANDALL JARRELL BY DAVID SCHORR FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Where Jarrell differed from Lowell and Berryman was in his war service, from which many of his most memorable poems sprang. He began his writing career as an undergraduate at Vanderbilt, where he majored in psychology, and where he got to know Warren, Ransom, Tate, and Taylor. When Ransom went to Kenyon, Jarrell followed, teaching there before he enlisted in the Army. The Army gives Pritchard his best biographical chapter, enjoyable not only for its quotations from Jarrell's letters to his first wife, but also for Pritchard's well-modulated account of both war poetry and Jarrell's claims in the genre. James Dickey has criticized the poems as concerned only with types, not individuals, and as being overwhelmed by pity, but Pritchard ably shows not only how typicality can have its poetry—a poetry of "flat assertiveness" and (quoting R. W. Flint) a "static grandeur of sentence." The pity, as Pritchard justly says, is mixed with many other emotions, often borne within metaphor, of which he instances "something close to contempt and ironic self-knowledge."

After the war, and a brief period in New York, Jarrell fetched up at the Women's College of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where he became a powerful teacher of literature and writing. He continued to lecture and write essays and reviews, and gave full rein to his personal indignation at bad work. As Taylor once wrote, "If you published something he didn't like, he behaved as though you had been disloyal to him in some way." He felt the same about lapses in books he reviewed, or declines in poets he had admired, like Auden.

Pritchard retails many of the best Jarrell critical one-liners, which almost always include a surreal little metaphor. Here is Jarrell on Whitman's calling himself a "habitan of Vienna": "One has an immediate vision of him as a sort of French-Canadian half-breed to whom the Viennese are offering, with trepidation, through the bars of a zoological garden, little mounds of whipped cream." Pritchard comments, "This is both very funny and eerily right about the line, but is of course not 'analysis' so much as something a novelist or poet might produce as the only adequate response to Whitman's grotesque phrase."

Pritchard offers welcome insights into the powers and the drawbacks of Jarrell's critical practice. The most valuable point Pritchard makes is that Jarrell (sometimes denigrated as merely a "journalist") was fully capable of extended and profound critical essays (he cites the M.A. thesis on Housman and

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the long treatments of Frost and Auden), but that "his style of analysis is less analytical than literary and satirical, a 'creative' exaggeration." Comparing Blackmur and Jarrell on a poem by Stevens enables Pritchard to show how much Blackmur is concerned with impersonally identifying a certain potential of language (language approaching the sound of nonsense) while Jarrell prefers to express a personal response to the poem, seeing it as an indictment of the monotonous present. Jarrell preferred to describe the manner of poetry as if he were commenting on a couturiere's spring show. On Marianne Moore: "Like the Literary Digest, she sent postcards to only the nicer animals"; on Eve Merriam's poems: "They are really pre-poetry, verse for Pavlov's dogs"; on H.D.'s *Tribute to the Angels*: "[It] is one for those who enjoy any poem by H. D., or for those collectors who enjoy any poem that includes the Virgin, Raphael, Azrael, Uriel, John on Patmos, Hermes Trismegistus, and the Bona Dea."

One either sees the point in these remarks, or not. For those who don't, Jarrell is being "cruel," "flippant," "dismissive," "destructive." But for those who do, those one-liners provoke thoughts, respectively, on the point of allowing the repellent into verse, or on a style's becoming automatism, or on the dangers of heterogeneity in myth-writing. There is always a theoretical stylistic point behind Jarrell's savage or mocking little comments. He had a diviner's gift for the false note, the tonal pretense. One could say that Jarrell put his passivity into his poetry, his ferocity into his criticism (and into his one novel, *Pictures from an Institution*, a satire on Sarah Lawrence, where he had briefly taught). He also put into his criticism the enthusiasm of a born teacher; and perhaps Pritchard's apt and well-chosen quotations will take younger readers back to the several books of Jarrell's memorable criticism.

The chronological selection of fifty poems that Pritchard has made from Jarrell's oeuvre is a stringent one, since the *Complete Poems* (1969) contains about 300 poems. Certainly this selection contains the strongest poems, which are not necessarily the most psychologically revealing ones. The war poems (many of them, as Pritchard says, better than the best-known and shortest one, "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner") are here, as are the childhood poems, the fairy-tale poems, the poems about California, the late suicidal poems.

Pritchard has warmly made the case for Jarrell as a poet both documentary and symbolic, and has equably reported the case against him (the sameness, the sentimentality, the childishness). It can certainly be said that the mature Jarrell doesn't sound like anyone else, that the tuning fork he struck still gives off its wistful, even tearful childhood tone, along with (more rarely) its humorous, rueful, self-mocking one. At his very best, as in "A Girl in a Library" or "Deutsch Durch Freud," both tones join. In the latter, he speaks for everyone who has been entranced by a language without really learning it. The poem is the tender and ridiculous outpouring of someone who knows lieder German, opera German, *en face* German, but not *German*:

> It is by Trust, and Love, and reading Rilke
> Without *ein Wörterbuch*,
> that man learns German . . .
> And Heine! At the ninety-sixth *mir träumte*
> I sigh as a poet, but dimple as *ein Schuler*.
> And yet—if it's easy is it German?
> And yet, that *wunderschöne Lindenbaum*
> *Im Monderscheine*! What if it is in Schilda?
> It's moonlight, isn't it? *Mund, Mond, Herz*, and *Schmerz*
> Sing round my head, in *Zeit* and *Ewigheit*.

"A Girl in a Library" addresses one of those whom Jarrell, in his harsher moments, hated—those for whom books held absolutely no charms. And yet in this poem he suspects that he himself, in embracing art, has missed a fuller life; and that the coed dozing in boredom over her books knows what life is in a way that he, incapable of life's unconscious sexual flourishing, does not. He begins his contemplation of the sleeping girl with a sinking heart:

> If someone questioned you, *What doest thou here?*
> You'd knit your brows like an orangoutang
> (But not so sadly; not so thoughtfully)
> And answer with a pure heart, guilelessly:
> *I'm studying.*"

But as he watches her, her intellectual deficiencies fade in favor of her adequacy as beauty and fertility:

> Don't cry, little peasant. Sit and dream. . . .
> The firelight of a long, blind, dreaming story
> Lingers upon your lips; and I have seen
> Firm, fixed forever in your closing eyes,
> The Corn King beckoning to his Spring Queen.

Pritchard's account of the complexity of Jarrell's tone here reminds us that "the attempt to hold mockery and love, satire and sympathy together in the same poem puts a great strain on the speaking voice." He claims that New Critical terms (the poem "increasingly well-wrought, autotelic, full of ironic tension, unified through paradoxical resolutions") are relatively useless here (I doubt it), and comes down on the side of Henry James's criterion of "felt life" in praising Jarrell's poems. But surely, I want to answer, besides praising "felt life" on the plane of emotional realization, one must want to praise certain effects of language and structural ingenuity as the means of enacting the felt life.

Piano

As Clara leafed through her husband's
compositions in her lap,

his *Carnival, The Wild Horseman,*
quavers bound in a florid cursive

down one staff to the next, from one hand
to another, hardly breathing,

she fingered the passages on her knee
and listened to the sound they made.

She looked up, alone with the kind of quiet
rooms have after a banquet.

Beside her, a ravaged plate, hydrangea and lilies,
flushed, drugged, bruised like plums,

the olive pit still clinging to its meat.
A page slipped to the floor.

In another room, a tap dripped into its pan
with a staggered gait, lame and tireless,

never farther than a room away, never near.
She sipped iced coffee, black, sweet.

On the side of her porcelain parfait-cup,
a pianist suspended his hands over the keys,

his head tilted to one side,
listening to the music,

its infinite variety.
He never could touch the piano—

like a box inside a lover's eye,
a spare blue shape that curved away.

Bruce Bond

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Pritchard, whose normative American poet is Robert Frost, has always been a partisan of the speaking voice in verse, and he finds it (as I do, too) believably present in Jarrell. What I miss in Jarrell is the presence of something formally new in addition to the pitying and querulous Jarrellian tone, which was already a considerable poetic achievement. Jarrell's free verse is often lame and wandering; his iambics are everyone's iambics, his soldiers hapless boys, his children generic children, his closures familiar closures. What he truthfully once said of E. E. Cummings can too often be said of him: "He is, alas! a monotonous poet. Everything a poem does is, to old readers, expected. 'Type Four,' they murmur. 'Well done!' Then they yawn."

Jarrell had prefaced this comment by saying that so many critics had been more than just to Cummings's virtues that he would like to be unjust about his faults. Pritchard is just, and more than just, to Jarrell's virtues and to his sufferings—as a man, as a critic, as a poet. Time will forget the first, be charmed by the second, be grateful for the third. Through the agreeable *Selected Poems*, a younger generation may come to know a very touching American minor poet. And when stylishness in critical writing comes back into fashion, Jarrell will once again, in his impish bravado, be an example of the gusto that criticism can evoke.

HELEN VENDLER has been named A. Kingsley Porter University Professor at Harvard. She is writing a commentary on Shakespeare's sonnets.

Up Against the Wall

BY CHRISTOPHER HOPE

The Innocent by Ian McEwan

(Doubleday, 288 pp., $18.95)

There was a time when setting spy novels in Berlin was a popular business that seemed destined to endure. But the events of November 9, 1989, when the Berlin Wall turned literally overnight from a death trap into a painted, tawdry, pathetic anachronism, have done terminal damage to the business, and to Berlin's reputation as the espionage capital of Europe.

Writers favored the divided city; John Le Carré was supreme in the field, and Len Deighton was also drawn to the place. Behind the Wall, so the stories went, antagonists lurked who were more than a match for our own people. East Germany, as portrayed in the spy stories, seemed to mean business; in the ranks of the truly nasty Communist states, it was right up there with, say, North Korea, particularly when measured for mystery and ruthless professionalism. Its secret brutalities were such that nobody except moles and spies could penetrate it, protected as it was by fortified boundaries. Indeed, the only benefits of the Wall were that it provided a safe habitat for wildlife and an irresistible challenge to thriller writers.

East Berlin became a country of the mind, where anything was possible. It was as remote and as sinister as Berlin in the early 1930s, but not half as much fun. It was, in some ways, pre-war Berlin resurrected, but without the cabaret, the capitalists, or the whores. Its dictators wore their hair short, their glasses wire-rimmed; its border guards were ordered to shoot on sight, and the spy who got caught could expect no mercy. In the minds of moviegoers, the sight of Richard Burton in his doomed clamber up the Wall in *The Spy Who Came In from The Cold* settled the matter. Berlin was a seriously bad place.

Berlin, it is true, has always boasted this special, strangely anxious atmosphere. The trick was to capture it: the gamey, slightly perverse air of danger, cynicism, and style in which there lurked an irresistible scent of long lost decadence. Those were the constituents of the famous "Berliner Luft." The phrase was itself a fine instance of the sardonic local wit, since the famous air was a fume-laden atmosphere compounded of noxious emissions. The more closely you looked, in fact, the more it seemed that Berlin displayed only a distant glitter of its Weimar excitements and its 1930s style. At its heart, instead, was a kind of muddy despair. It was a nervous, frozen place, rimmed with glitter. What had been hot had cooled. Berlin was the capital of the cold war. Of course, you might ignore the bleak reminders of its true nature as you wandered around the center of West Berlin, briefly warmed by the deceitful glow from the neon lights; but the moment you moved into the desolate, derelict acres near the Wall, the temperature fell and the cold set in.

So serious was it all, however, that writers of what were really entertaining fictions achieved a credibility for the novel of espionage that raised it, in the opinion of many critics and readers, to the level of "real" literature. The fall of the Wall has put paid to all of that, though highly successful practitioners of the cold war spy novel have been heard bravely asserting on television that they are not a mite nervous about the collapse of communism. They are like a bunch of palace retainers sitting around in the aftermath of Hamlet's death and arguing that the demise of the prince and large sections of the royal family was hardly likely to influence events in the Danish court.

The collapse of the Marxist dictatorships may have damaged the Communist Parties of Eastern Europe; it is likely also to damage the bank balances of Western publishers accustomed to placing their hands on their wallets and swearing to tell the whole truth about East-West espionage. Their authors may declare they're not in the least embarrassed by recent developments in Eastern Europe, but then, in the immortal words of Mandy Rice Davies, herself intimately involved in a sex and spy scandal of the '60s, "They would, wouldn't they?"

The recent harm to the spy novel is not that competing powers will no longer spy on each other. Of course they will. The removal of the barrier reveals, rather, how far below Western expectations the quality, the styles of life, and the aspirations of East German spies actually fell. As it turns out, East Germans have spent far more time spying on each other than spying on the West. Indeed, at one time most of the population appeared to be organized into an espionage equivalent of the suburban neighborhood watch. As for those who actually controlled this form of national dementia, the bosses, the spy masters, they were holed up in their secret hunting lodges, watching imported pornographic videos on specially supplied Japanese equipment. It turns out that truth was a lot sadder, and a lot more interesting, than anything ever dreamed in the spy novels.

In any event, the feeling that Ian McEwan's new novel induces is one of déjà lu. This is Berlin in the 1950s, before the Eastern sector was walled up. All interested parties are spying on each other. The Americans are spying on the

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Russians, the Russians are spying on the Americans, the British are spying on the Americans and the Russians and then betraying the secrets so painfully gleaned. The guilty fascination with which the British view such scandals as the defection of Philby, Burgess, and the others still reverberates; even now it is never far below the surface of British society, and each new disclosure of cold war treachery flushes out yet more speculation about the existence, within the British secret service, of not only a "third" man, but a fourth and a fifth and a sixth.

The Innocent is itself based on a real intelligence gathering expedition mounted by the CIA and M16 in Berlin in 1956. It was a project betrayed by the Englishman George Blake, who was later caught and imprisoned in Britain as a Soviet spy, only to be sprung by two "peace campaigners," in the belief, one assumes, that the Russian urge to assemble nuclear warheads was somehow better for peace than the Americans' inclination to do the same thing, and that those who spied for them, therefore, deserved every consideration.

Into the bombed-out capital of the vanquished enemy steps Leonard Marnham, a post office engineer from the London suburb of Tottenham. Marnham has never been away long from home; indeed, so great is his suburban insularity that we suspect quite soon that he has never left Tottenham before. He has some trouble using the phone, despite his post office job, and he is very awkwardly placed in Berlin, the broken capital of a vanquished people, an unlikely conqueror among a demoralized and defeated enemy. Right from the start it should be said that Leonard's innocence tends to be of a particularly English variety. He is tall, thin, bespectacled, and painfully shy. He has seen nothing and knows nothing, but he believes everything he hears, including information from his superior officers about who the real enemy in Berlin will turn out to be: "It's not the Germans or the Russians who are the problem here. It isn't even the French. It's the Americans."

And so it turns out. The Americans are even more alarming than Leonard in his innocence might expect. Here is Leonard's first encounter with an American named Glass, from whom more trouble is clearly due:

> As Glass buttoned up his shirt, Leonard had a glimpse of a stocky body beneath wiry black hair which grew right across the shoulders. He buttoned his collar tightly round a thick neck. From a desk he picked up a ready-knotted tie attached to a hoop of plastic which he snapped on as he stood. He wasted no movements. He took his jacket from the back of a chair and walked to the wall-map as he put it on. The suit was dark blue, creased and worn in places to a shine and Leonard was watching. There were ways of wearing clothes that made them quite irrelevant. You could get away with anything.

The language of this description is interesting: it reveals that we are in the familiar world of the political thriller. And the completion of that world, the true aim of these images, the hope by which they exist, the apotheosis of the spy novel, is to be turned one day, by the grace of Hollywood, from a book into a movie.

The Americans in Berlin are what one might have expected, fast-talking, profane, lecherous, rich, very hard on the Commies, arrogant, and entranced with their technical abilities to tunnel beneath the Russian lines and to tap all their phone calls. These initial encounters between the English innocent and the war-wise Americans are rendered with all of McEwan's uncanny skill for registering the awkward fumbling encounters by which people get to know each other. He has a dazzling capacity for sketching, in crisp cinematic images, the ways that mutually suspicious people gesture, feint, and parry as they size each other up. Leonard's fateful meeting with the thirty-year-old divorcée Maria, who is to take away his innocence, his virginity, and his Anglican peace of mind, is sad, touching, and bitterly witty.

Alas, his slow, sweet initiation into the ways of love is one thing, spying is another. Leonard's job, rather like Leonard himself, is pretty boring. First he assembles tape recorders. Then, as his security rating is upgraded, he spends more and more time in the secret tunnel, but nothing like the time he spends in Maria's modest apartment learning to make love. Having been ordered by the Americans to help them spy on the Russians, poor Leonard is perplexed when he is requested by the British to keep his eye on the Americans. And he is as bad at this as he is at everything else; he watches the Americans playing softball and, yes, it emerges that he cannot even catch a ball. One begins to tire of Leonard. McEwan's accomplishment in re-creating Berlin in the mid-'50s (the portrait of the city thirty-five years ago is full of convincing details) for the purpose of setting an English wimp loose in it begins to pall. Even Maria is eventually reduced to a device for exposing Leonard's myriad modest failings, postal, sexual, and political.

The fact that the tunnel was based on a British-American spy project that really happened does very little to strengthen the story of Leonard's tunnel. The introduction of the real spy, George Blake, as Leonard's neighbor seems to offer a further basis of fact, but it does nothing for the fictional lives of Leonard and Maria. The reader, who will probably have grown weary of Leonard's English ineptitude, is likely to be even more disconcerted when Leonard decides to assert himself. For the most hazy reasons, he decides that he is a representative of the victorious nation that has subdued the Nazi foe, and therefore he should give physical expression to this achievement by knocking his German mistress about. The assault should seem awful, or at least reprehensible, but in McEwan's telling it seems only faintly nasty, and given Leonard's almost militant passivity up to this point, not a little silly.

Among the few steady centers of interest in a novel that seems never to focus very intently is Otto, Maria's miscreant ex-husband who haunts Leonard's waking hours. Even though Otto's appearance is rudely cut short, he is in many ways the most interesting character in the book. He could be said to represent the apotheosis of the bad old German: he is a violent, drunken monster, blighting the tender affair of Leonard and Maria. Thus we are prepared for horror of some sort; and besides, the violent perversities that somehow undermine sexual love have long been a theme of McEwan's writing.

Otto arrives unexpectedly, and with a considerable degree of ingenuity, as a masterly eruption of the profane into the sacred ceremonies of the lovers. When he comes to call, he turns into the monster in the cupboard, and on the monster's breath the terrified Leonard can detect the smell of onions and sauerkraut. Yet seen up close, the long-awaited German enemy turns out to be both more and less than expected:

> The head was small, the hair was thinning on top and was of the sandy, tobacco-stained kind, almost greenish at the roots, that Leonard had noticed frequently around Berlin. The nose was big and weak-looking. Along its sides were ruptured vessels under tight shiny skin. Only the hands gave the impression of strength—raw red, and bony and big at the knuckles. The head was small, and so were the shoulders.

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It was hard to tell with him slumped down, but this was beginning to look like a runt, a bully and a runt.

Otto's fate at the hands of the lovers is engineered with all of McEwan's love for the convincing clinical detail. The outcome of this clash between the monster and the innocent lovers is gory, seedy, and sad. More disablingly, it is also unlikely. What had been a spy novel that held its own within the guidelines of the traditional form becomes a succession of horrifying moments, the implausibility and the melodrama of which only the most tedious of horror movies would attempt to convey. For no better reason than to make our flesh creep, we are suddenly invited to view the literary equivalent of a lurid video. Given the effortless nastiness of much modern life (and the expensive nastiness of many modern videos), Leonard and Maria's novel method of getting rid of the troublesome Otto, and the tragicomic consequences of their act, seem neither unusual nor reprehensible.

Disenchantment sets in between the lovers, now joined in guilty complicity, and their mutual mistrust becomes a reflection of the deepening distrust among the occupying powers of Berlin. It was always going to end badly. And of course the end of innocence, this being a British story, is not tragedy, nor even experience, but simply a muddle. As one might have guessed, the dreadful American Glass gets Leonard's girl. All Leonard gets is a one-way ticket home to Tottenham.

The closing sections of *The Innocent* are full of the redoubled ironies of which McEwan is a gifted practitioner—the grisly dispatch of the wretched Otto by the panic-stricken lovers may be read perhaps as a symbol for the attempt by the Western allies to bury the old German nightmare—but they seem less plausible than even the familiar contrivances of the spy story will permit. Leonard Marnham, who once had an affair of the heart in war-torn Berlin and secretly tapped Russian communications, returns to the scene of the crime thirty years later, but now he is a prematurely aged Englishman from Surrey who works in the hearing-aid business and suffers from a heart condition. He carries a letter from Maria, now an American housewife and the widow of his old rival Glass. Alone in the divided city, Leonard dreams of a reconciliation with his lost love and of their triumphant return to Berlin. "They would visit the old places and be amused by the changes, yes, they would go out to Potsdamer Platz one day and climb the wooden platform and take a good long look at the Wall together, before it was all torn down."

In 1987? What is this but a way of giving Leonard a kind of second sight, an awareness of events that, from the vantage point of 1990, writer and reader know to have happened, but that were unguessed at even a year ago? Perhaps this is the source of the uneasiness that pervades the novel. *The Innocent* looks back to Berlin just after the war, when all was flux and skulduggery and the terrified memory of the Russian onslaught on the city, a place where anything might happen. Yet the novel must also peer into the future, toward momentous and wholly unexpected events, and the tale of the post office engineer from Tottenham pales by comparison.

The feeling, unworthy though it may be, is inescapable: in writing *The Innocent*, McEwan was overtaken by events. A crumbled wall left him with a crumbling plot, which he was obliged to shore up by signaling to the reader that he is aware of what is to come. Thus the novel ends in an air of embarrassment. What we have is a clever, rather old-fashioned fiction overwhelmed by fact. What really happened in Berlin on November 9, 1989, has proved, and will go on proving, much stranger than the fictions of yesteryear.

CHRISTOPHER HOPE is the author most recently of *Moscow! Moscow!* (Heinemann).

Good Offices

BY PAUL STARR

Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It by James Q. Wilson

(Basic Books, 408 pp., $24.95)

Perhaps the greatest barrier to understanding bureaucracy is the belief that we already understand it. Don't we know, all too well, that bureaucracies are slow, rigid, glued to rules and procedures, jealous of perks, zealous in defending turf and expanding budgets, grossly inefficient—and, for all these reasons, in need of careful oversight by legislators, courts, commissions, auditors, inspectors general, the press, and the public itself?

So goes the popular wisdom about bureaucracy in America. Yet, as James Q. Wilson shows, these conventional opinions, and even the theories of bureaucracy proposed by economists and some political scientists, are vastly overgeneralized and often wrong, and therefore a misleading basis for reform. Indeed, some of the very reforms inspired by the conventional wisdom have made government in America more inflexible, more cumbersome, more costly—more "bureaucratic" in the everyday sense of that word.

Wilson's book is no quick rehash of thinking about bureaucracy. It is a mature summation of many close studies of government agencies, as well as of Wilson's own considerable research and reflection. The great virtue of this work is its discriminating judgment and its rich, complex illustrations, often drawn from published case histories by his graduate students that are well-known books in their own right. Rather than paint, much less indict, government agencies with a broad brush, Wilson draws careful distinctions among them, points to counterexamples that contradict familiar myths, and shows that some features of bureaucracy that Americans take to be universal are actually expressions of American politics.

The distinctiveness of the bureaucratic conundrum in America is a running theme in the book. The maladies of bureaucracy in the United States are not a lesser form of the illness that besets centrally planned economies with one-party states. What sets the American bureaucratic pattern apart, even from that of other Western nations, is its openness *and* its legalism. American bureaucracy, Wilson observes, is "unlike that found in almost any other advanced nation" because it is paradoxically both "laden with rules" and "suffused with participation."

Recent decades have magnified national differences, as we have adopted more extensive requirements for due process, public disclosure, competitive bidding, equal opportunity and affirmative action, and environmental impact assessment. Congressional committees

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overseeing federal agencies have proliferated. A congressman's office has become a service center for constituents concerned about benefits, contracts, and other federal actions. Courts are far more active than they are in other countries in reviewing administrative procedures and decisions.

Indeed, today the president, the Congress, and the judiciary represent three independent centers of authoritative direction of government agencies. Citizens themselves also have more direct access through freedom of information laws, litigation, and requirements for public meetings and citizen consultation. The result is a complex web of constraints that have made it more difficult than ever for government to perform to the public's satisfaction.

At the outset Wilson attempts to preempt and to disarm some critics by insisting that his work is neither theoretical nor practical, but "primarily descriptive." This is too modest. To be sure, unlike theorists from Weber to contemporary economists, Wilson does not try to develop a universal model of bureaucracy based on a few intrinsic elements: the whole burden of his work is to show the limitations of such theories. Still, his book does have an analytical framework and an abundance of related propositions that would surely be called a theory by another author, particularly if he or she were coming up for tenure.

His book is also more practical and prescriptive than Wilson at first acknowledges. Here, however, the book's fundamental sympathies seem at odds with its parting recommendations, where Wilson seems to forget key points in his own analysis and reverts to conservative impulses.

The greater part of *Bureaucracy* is sympathetic to government in two senses. Wilson is appreciative of the need for effective public institutions, and he attempts to understand sympathetically what bureaucrats do and the difficulties that surround their work. At the very foundation of his argument is the crucial importance of tasks performed by people at the base of organizations: the police on their beat, soldiers at war, case workers at their desks, teachers in their classrooms. From differences among these tasks Wilson makes up his primary classification of agencies. Similarly, he emphasizes the key importance of organizational context, distinguishing among the types of political environments that agencies confront.

Around these categories Wilson builds much of his account. His point is not, however, that the tasks and environments dictate bureaucratic activity. Nor does he accept the notion of a "bureaucratic personality" that makes government agencies lethargic and averse to risk. Above all, "organization matters." The purposes, understandings of mission, and beliefs about the world that infuse an organization from its inception are especially crucial in determining how well it performs.

This approach may just seem common sense to readers uninitiated in recent academic controversy. It contrasts sharply, however, with the models of bureaucracy advanced by many economists and other social scientists. Those models typically attempt to explain how bureaucracies perform—or rather, how they fail to perform—by reasoning from abstract characteristics, such as a monopoly on providing a service or the absence of private property rights. Analyses of this kind, often based on analogies between public agencies and private firms, rarely pay any attention to the "soft" issues of organizational culture and mission that are emphasized by Wilson. Nor are they very attentive to the practical tasks and the political worlds of agencies.

One such model, for example, assumes that Congress has the same relation to federal agencies that the owners of a firm ("principals") have to its managers ("agents"), even though, as Wilson points out, federal agencies have many "principals" (the president as well as Congress, and even different committees within Congress). Another well-known model suggests that the behavior of bureaucrats can be explained by their interest in maximizing budgets, even though federal bureaucrats cannot easily appropriate bigger budgets for their own benefit. (Has the expansion of Social Security enriched its administrators?) Often favored by conservatives, these approaches figure prominently in "Leviathan" theories that purport to explain why government is too big.

Wilson is by no means opposed to the proposition that bureaucrats are rationally motivated; their motivations are just more complex than the economists suppose. A good example of Wilson's approach is his rebuttal of the common view that bureaucrats are "imperialistic." Wilson shows that bureaucracies are as likely to resist taking on new programs as they are to try to expand. All things being equal, he observes, agency heads would prefer bigger budgets, but all things are not equal. If additional programs diverge sharply from an agency's traditional mission, they often seem more a burden than an advantage. Expanded programs and budgets bring in more "stakeholders," increase scrutiny, and often reduce autonomy. The FBI long resisted taking over narcotics enforcement; the Agriculture Department has tried to get the huge food stamp program transferred elsewhere. In other words, a commitment to mission may be turn out to be stronger than the simple interest in bigness and budgets.

Similarly, Wilson emphasizes that government agencies do not produce a service in the ordinary sense; they have a host of "contextual goals," such as due process, that Congress, the courts, and the public at large have imposed upon them in increasing degree. These additional goals make it difficult to evaluate directly the efficiency of government agencies. The agencies are almost certainly not terribly efficient in the narrow sense of producing a service for the least cost. But when all the goals the public asks them to serve are taken into account, the agencies may be performing reasonably well.

Wilson's appreciation of these complexities is illustrative of the basic sympathies of his analysis. But it also illustrates the discontinuity between analysis and prescription that mars the latter portions of his book. Shortly after pointing out the difficulties in assessing efficiency, he drops his broader conception in favor of the more narrow one. Discussing the merits of turning public functions over to private firms, he cites, with hardly a reservation, studies comparing the costs of public and private services that, among their various weaknesses, fail to consider the contextual goals that public agencies serve.

Sympathetic to privatizing public services, Wilson also advocates deregulating them—that is, relaxing the elaborate rules that now encumber public institutions. Privatization and deregulation of the public sector, however, are two quite different approaches. Wilson never examines their relative merits and their potential risks. To deregulate federal agencies would presumably mean cutting back on some—but not all—of the distinctive rules regulating public institutions. We might deregulate agencies, for example, by freeing managers from civil service rules that now limit their ability to reassign or fire employees, without necessarily repealing the Freedom of Information Act that enables citizens to get access to unclassified government documents. Privatization, on the other hand, would move services into private firms and at a single stroke do away with civil service reg-

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ulations, freedom of information requirements, and a great many other public-sector practices meant to achieve "contextual" goals.

Wilson avoids saying, however, what contextual goals he wants us to abandon or modify or whether our efforts to achieve them have worked so badly that we should opt for the more drastic measure of privatization. So he leaves the call for deregulating government in vague terms, and he never confronts the hard choices. A good case can be made for cutting back some of the controls that reduce flexibility and quickness of response in the public sector, but Wilson never develops the case in detail or explores whether these alternatives ought to be preferred to privatization.

Finally, though Wilson emphasizes the importance of organizational culture and mission throughout the book, he has little to say about what public leadership can do today to create the sense of purpose and commitment that has been so crucial to the most successful agencies. Executives should "understand the culture" of their agencies, keep to their mission, match authority to tasks, but recognize that the "settled institutions" of public service are no arena "to find Big Answers." As one of Wilson's closest students has pointed out to me, the advice Wilson offers to public managers at the end is almost entirely concerned with protecting the concerns of a going agency. The tone is pessimistic, as he seems to have given up on significant public innovation.

Despite its discouraging finish, Wilson's book may well be the best book now available on bureaucracy in America. It ought to serve as a triple antidote to overly abstracted academic theories, overly generalized public opinion, and overly rigid control of public management. If there is a single lesson that the reader ought to draw from Wilson's work, it is this: stop blaming slothful bureaucrats or some endemic disease of the modern state for the maladies of American government. Understand what agencies actually do, the environments they work in, the incentives they face. And, most of all, understand that much of what bothers us about bureaucracy originates not with our much detested bureaucrats, but with a political system that has asked the agencies to serve a multitude of ends and a variety of masters. Since the problems of our bureaucracy begin in the American political process, perhaps that is what we need to change.

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CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

"just plain awful" so that they might have had a better chance of ousting Thatcher before the upcoming parliamentary election. They fear the Tory leadership really does believe its own rhetoric about the outcome being a triumph for Thatcher and her poll tax, that the latter will therefore be left unreformed, and the universally despised Thatcher remain Labour's best electoral asset. They realize that, though voters may now be thanking a Tory council for a low poll tax, they may later express their outrage at the regressiveness of the tax itself by voting Labour in the next parliamentary election.

The notion that profligate councils pander to the greed of the non-taxpaying poor for unnecessary social services sounds remarkably like one of Ronald Reagan's phony anti-welfare anecdotes. It's more likely that the budgets of Labour councils are high because their constituents are largely poor and socialists believe in providing public social services. Tory councils, on the other hand, pretend that nowadays there are no truly poor people and wouldn't provide services even if there were.

ROBERT ALLEN
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Defense of secretary

To the editors:

Edward Luttwak doesn't want to see Caspar Weinberger's aim of building up our military as a strategy ("Party Animal," June 11). It was meant, however, to be a powerful symbol and deterrent that would not only keep peace, but also allow us to negotiate *good* treaties with the Soviets. Not mentioned is Weinberger's defense policy of not committing our troops unless our vital interests are at stake and then, when that commitment is made, devoting all the strength possible to win the objective. What Luttwak fails to note is that Weinberger saw beyond the necessary building of the armed forces, which was indeed costly, to the significance of being a good friend with many foreign governments, which in the long run is the most cost-effective policy one could have.

The English chose to honor Weinberger because they wanted to show their gratitude for American aid in the Falklands War and not because they were playing up to the secretary. To imply that Weinberger could be bought with a parade is both cruel and unfair, to say the least.

ESTHER TRACHTMAN
Tonawanda, New York

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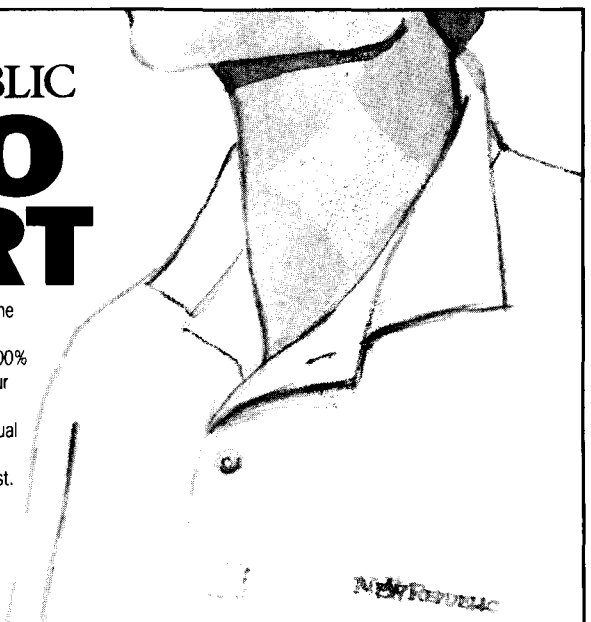

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Praise the Lord

AT DUSK ON EIGHTH STREET, A breeze blowing out of season, the lowering sun gently gilding the lush brick of old Washington and the glassy, boxy spoils of "development" that lord over it, I enjoyed (to paraphrase a poet, which one should never do) an hour of phantasmal peace. It happened in a church, a Baptist church, during choir practice. The weakening light streamed through the blues and pinks and yellows of the stained windows onto the chaste white walls of a galleried basilican expanse, at the rear of which I stood, not peacefully in the beginning. When I came upon the choir, it was perfecting a refrain: "There's something wonderful about Je*sus*, there's something wonderful about *Him*!" The drums idle on the stage suggested that this was a rehearsal for a sacred swing.

NO, NOT ON THE STAGE. THE drums waited on the *bimah*; and the huge wheels of florid glass through which the light poured were designed in the shape of Stars of David, two to a window. For the Greater New Hope Baptist Church was once Congregation Adas Israel. For years I'd observed the giant Jewish stars hovering anachronistically over the inner city, and wondered about the story of this building, whose extravagant Moorish exterior looked like the face of any late nineteenth-century synagogue in any capital of Central Europe. From the street the colored windows were colorless with dirt, and the domes of the towers at the four corners of the structure were rudely gone. All this seemed to promise an experience of Jewish sadness. Inside the promise deepened. The doors of the ark were sealed and a cross hung over them; and painted above the ark on the apse was a black Jesus with a white beard, and a black putto with white wings on each side.

SOMETHING IN ME REBELLED. FORmer synagogues are grim things. Jewish law teaches to see in them a reduction of holiness and Jewish history teaches to see in them ruin. Though the sanctity of a synagogue is owed to the people who use it, the sanctity doesn't quite depart the building when the people do; the rabbis are strict about what can and cannot be done in the disposition of a synagogue. Still, at the sight of a synagogue become a church, it is experience, not exegesis, that has prepared Jews for the worst. No sooner did Christianity become a state religion in the fourth century than the long, ugly saga of synagogues destroyed, confiscated, and consecrated to Christ was begun; and in the high pews I was put in mind of a chilling text from graduate school days, an appendix to a study of early Christian anti-Semitism that gave the Latin formula of the special prayer for the consecration of a church that was once a synagogue.

IN THE GREATER NEW HOPE BAPtist Church, in short, I was overwhelmed by what Salo Baron called "the lachrymose conception of Jewish history." I tapped my foot to the rising hymn and reflected that for some of us there's been something not wonderful about Jesus. The contradiction between the image on the window and the image on the wall surely denoted a tragedy. I wandered upstairs in an obituary spirit, to the gallery where the women would sit, to consider the mystery of collective memory—and there, below the star that looked across to the National Museum of American Art, I caught myself.

MY LACHRYMOSITY HAD AN INCONtrovertible basis in history, but it was misplaced. I had been seduced, like Jewish Jews often are, by the similarities between the present and the past. Up in the gallery, however, I was smitten with the differences. For the Jews of Adas Israel had not been persecuted or plundered. They had merely prospered. In 1950 they left downtown for uptown, and exchanged their Orientalist headquarters at Eighth and I for their Modernist headquarters at Connecticut and Porter. The front of the church announces that it purchased the building in 1954. I had no idea what became of the grandiloquent edifice between 1950 and 1954. (The elders would not have sold a synagogue to a church: Adas Israel was begun in 1869 as a secession of Orthodox Jews who could not abide the liberal reforms of the Washington Hebrew Congregation.) But I was certain that what the blacks of this church had won the Jews of this synagogue had not lost. The fate of the Jewish community in Washington, like the fate of the Jewish community in America, was not an affair of tragedy. If there were scars to be commemorated in this house, the fresher ones belonged, I suspect, to its new inhabitants, not to its old ones.

THE CHEAPEST JEWISH THRILL IS to embarrass the urge to mourn. Thus I had a sweet time at Greater New Hope. I treated myself to unmorbid thoughts: that there is more than a single Jewish story; that Jews may leave a place willingly, and gladly watch another faith or another people enjoy the blandishments of the Jewish presence; that an unhappy history is no more permanently unhappy than a happy history is permanently happy; that Jewish history has moved on, that it has almost completely rid itself of the continent that tried to rid itself almost completely of Jews; that the experiment in America and the experiment in Israel may fulfill the Jewish fantasy of the unprecedented. Fugitive, heartening thoughts. Not untimely ones, either: Israel is led again by Jews who believe that a Jew must always live wherever a Jew has lived, and the fall of communism in the old countries is unleashing a nostalgia that is remarkable even for American Jews.

A CHURCH IS AN ODD PLACE FOR a Jew to lighten up, but a synagogue would have conducted the mind in a different direction. And my hour of phantasmal peace did not stop there. The gospel song on the *bimah* gave relief also from another pressure. The quarrel between American Jews and American blacks has not been based on nothing. There are matters of domestic and foreign policy about which the two communities have deep and legitimate differences. But for too long the anti-Semitism of blacks and the racism of Jews have draped themselves in the legitimacy of those differences. The black-Jewish discussion in this country is sinking in prejudice of the hoariest sort. In the streets of the neighborhoods, the fight is not exactly over the principles of distributive justice.

AND SO I WAS GLAD TO BEQUEATH, as it were, "our" house to "them," glad that beneath the roof through which the prayers of Jews passed the prayers of blacks pass. I seemed to have found a limit to divergence. My friend Wolfe Kelman, one of the great rabbis of the century, who died in New York last week, would have understood. Wolfe marched in Selma with Hasidic prooftexts in his head. He showed this mortified Brooklyn boy that the Sabbath table had a place for "Amazing Grace," too. He never lost his dignity in controversy; Wolfe had the unimpeded poise of a man with a tradition of his own. I was reminded of the problem of poise when I left the church and was surrounded by the posters for Farrakhan's rally at the Convention Center across the street. As I said, phantasmal peace. Still, as Derek Walcott (the poet unfairly paraphrased above) has written,

> and this season lasted one moment, like the pause
> between dusk and darkness, between fury and peace,
> but, for such as our earth is now, it lasted long.

LEON WIESELTIER

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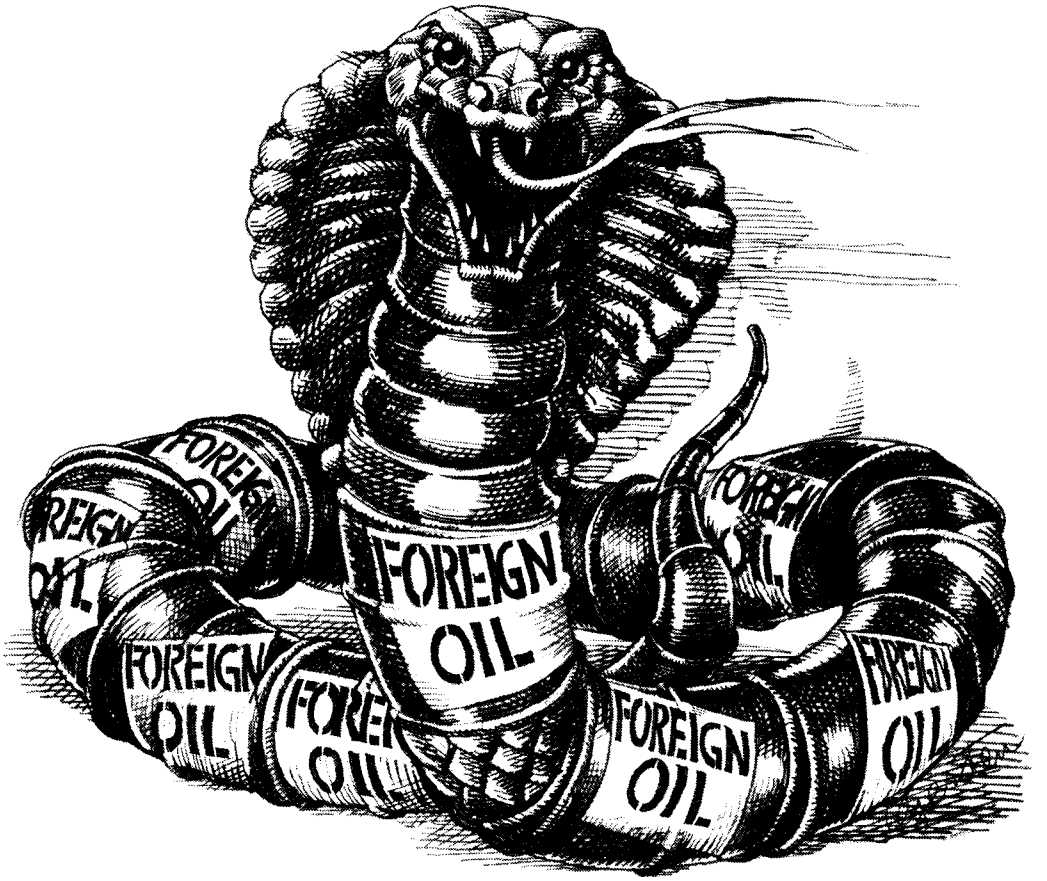

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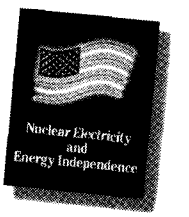

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